



**RHODE ISLAND
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FRONT COVER

Temple Beth-El, 688 Broad Street, corner of Glenham Street, Providence, Rhode Island, *circa* 1934. Home of Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David from 1910 to 1954. The building, somewhat altered, is now the home of Congregation Shaare Zedek, the successor of five merged South Providence Orthodox congregations. From the *Journal of the Nineteenth Anniversary of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David*.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

130 SESSIONS STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

JAMES JACOBS, EARLY JEWISH MERCHANT <i>by Beryl Segal and Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.</i>	461
MEMOIR OF MY LIFE <i>by Bezalel Nathan Resnik</i>	471
THE JEWISH WOMAN LIBERATED <i>by Eleanor F. Horvitz</i>	501
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NETWORKS AMONG R. I. JEWS <i>by Sonya Michel</i>	513
SOME REMARKS ON THE FRAGILITY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM <i>by William G. McLoughlin</i>	534
DEDICATION OF FENCE AT TOURO SYNAGOGUE <i>by Louis Baruch Rubinstein</i>	541
REMARKS OF PRESIDENT—ANNUAL MEETING OF SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE <i>by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.</i>	544
TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION	546
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES <i>by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.</i>	548
NECROLOGY	550
ERRATA AND ADDENDA	558
INDEX—VOLUME 7, NUMBERS 1 THROUGH 4	

JAMES JACOBS, EARLY JEWISH MERCHANT
OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

by BERYL SEGAL AND SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

Doctor Jacob R. Marcus, dean of American Jewish historians, has cautioned against naming some Jew as the first in a given location. "There was", he said, "always one there before."

The late David C. Adelman wrote: "Providence city directories from 1824 [the first to be published] to 1850 were published every three years [not quite accurate] and are inconclusive as to the Jewish population for the reason that there are many omissions and they cannot be relied upon to establish priority. The name of [Solomon] Pareira is not the first name of a Jew to appear in the Providence Directory, although the census of 1850 shows conclusively that he was the first Jewish settler." He adds: "The eldest child of Solomon and Miriam Pareira was born in Rhode Island and was in his twelfth year [in 1850] which shows that Pareira came to Providence in 1838 and was the first Jewish settler."

The name of James Jacobs, the subject of this inquiry, appeared in the Providence Directory of 1824. He may not have been the only Jew to appear in that first issue. In the same year one Samuel Lopez, "jeweller", had a shop or residence, or both on Cady's Lane. He had attended school on Meeting Street in Providence between 1810 and 1820 with his brother Jacob and, according to Adelman, was probably a nephew of Aaron Lopez. In 1824 he married the daughter of Benjamin Tallman, Jr. of Providence in the First Baptist Church. He appeared regularly in the Providence Directories as late as 1828-9, residing or conducting his business variously on Parsonage, George, Chestnut and Elm Streets.*

*David C. Adelman wrote as follows in *RIJH Notes* 2:17, June, 1956: "Mr. Clarkson V. Collins III, Librarian of The Rhode Island Historical Society has called our attention to an entry in the Master Roll of the privateer brig *Yankee* which the Society recently acquired. This entry reveals that one Samuel Lopez, 17 years of age, was a ship's boy in the wardroom mess of the brig's sixth voyage in 1815. Examination of the records of seamen reveals that he was certified as a seaman on October 23, 1819 when he was 21 years of age, that he was of dark complexion and born in Providence. The same records also disclose that Jacob Lopez was certified as a seaman on April 13, 1816 when he was 15 years of age and that he, too, was of dark complexion and was born in Providence. . . . These boys were born in 1798 and 1801 after the death of Aaron Lopez in 1783 . . . it is probable that they are the Lopez boys who attended the school on Meeting Street. This Samuel is probably the one who married the daughter of Benjamin Tallman, Jr."

Adelman also noted that David Lopez, a nephew of Aaron, conducted a trading post in Providence for his uncle, then living in Leicester, Massachusetts, during the Revolution from 1779 to 1782.

This intelligence and the story of James Jacobs which follows raise some semantic problems relative to Adelman's further statement that "There is no evidence that there was a Jewish settler in Providence until [1838]", unless both Samuel Lopez and James Jacobs were neither practicing nor ethnic Jews. We have no documentary evidence which would clarify this issue for either gentleman.

In the directory of 1824 James Jacobs was listed as having his business at 49 Westminster Street and residing at 59½ Westminster Street. The nature of his business or employment is not specified. In 1826 and 1828, however, he was listed as "Jacobs, James & Co., dry goods" with his business address given as 45 Westminster Street and his home or lodging at 49 Westminster Street.

In the March 27, 1820 issue and in later editions of the *Providence Daily Journal*, the following advertisement appeared describing Jacob's merchandise:

NEW GOODS

JAMES JACOBS has received and opened part of his spring assortment of seasonable Dry Goods among which are superior jet and blue, black Italian and Gros de Naples Silks, Chintz's &c. &c.

Will also receive on Saturday next, a further supply of fancy and staple Dry Goods from New York.

The year 1828 was marked by a significant event in the business life of Providence, then a town of 15,000 souls—the opening of the Arcade, a magnificent Greek revival edifice, which still survives, extending from Westminster Street to Weybosset Street with an impressive colonnade of granite monolithic columns at either end. It was one of the earlier, if not the first, galleria type building in America and had some of the same impact on the mercantile community of that time as do the shopping malls of today. The newspapers were lavish in their descriptions of the structure, and many businesses transferred their operations to this new and attractive location.

In the Providence Directory of 1830 James Jacobs was listed as conducting a "carpet warehouse" at 11 Arcade, while he resided at 24 Broad Street.

On July 7, 1830 the following advertisement appeared in the *Providence Daily Journal*:

PROVIDENCE CARPET WARE HOUSE

No. 11 Arcade

The subscriber having purchased of Mr. Solomon Pitkin his share of the stock of the Providence Carpet Ware House No 11, Arcade, will continue the business at the same place.

The present stock is very extensive, consisting of several thousand yards of *Brussels, Kidderminster and Venetian Floor* and *Stair* Carpeting of every quality, which will be sold at prices that cannot fail to please

ALSO

Imperial Wilton and Brussels Rugs, Printed Floor Cloth Printed Table and Stand Covers; Fringe, &c.

Having made an arrangement with the Agent of the Lowell Company, the most extensive Carpet Manufactory in this country, for the exclusive sale of their manufacture in this town, the attention of carpet dealers in this neighborhood, is invited to examine them, and may be assured that it will be made an object for them to purchase.

Orders for Painted Floor or Passage Carpets from the New England Painted Floor Cloth Company, will be received and furnished of any size or pattern, without seams, at short notice.

JAMES JACOBS

After this declaration of independence Jacobs continued to advertize his carpet warehouse (October 5, 1830):

PROVIDENCE CARPET WAREHOUSE

No. 11, Arcade

JAMES JACOBS, has received at the above Establishment, a large assortment of fine, superfine, and double superfine Ingrain, Brussels and Venetian floor and stair Carpeting.

Rugs, Printed Floor Cloths; Printed Table Stand and Piano covers; Painted Floor Cloth, for Carpets, of every size, without seams.

A large assortment of Damask Table Linen and napkins, 11, 12 and 13 quarter Rose Blankets; 11, 12 and 13, do Marseilles Quilts.

Jacobs had not, however, given up the dry goods business, as indicated by this advertisement of September 7, 1831.

JAMES JACOBS Wholesale Dry Good Dealer, No. 6 Arcade has received from the late Package Sales in New York and Boston, 23 packages reasonable Goods consisting of Prints, Flannels, Bombazetts, Circassians, Cloths, Cambrics; black worsted Hose, &c.

ALSO, on hand, a very handsome assortment of black and colored Gro de Berlin; Gro de Naples; Gro de Swiss; changeable Silks; every description of Muslins; Cambrics; Cravats; Brown Linen; best style grass bleached Linens; Velvets, Beaverteen; Padding; Buckram; Damask Table Linen, &c. &c.

Similar advertisements were inserted many times in the ensuing months. The following indicated a further expansion of his activities into cleaning, dyeing, and printing*:

(October 25, 1830)

THE NEW YORK DYING AND PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT, Dye and finish in a superior manner, *Broadcloths, Cassimeres, Silks and Satins, Crape, Cotton and Linen Goods, Hosiery, &c.*

They also dye and cleanse ladies' and gentlemen's garments, of all descriptions, and in particular, their method of restoring old and faded Silks and Satins, to their original beauty, has given universal satisfaction.

They also Cleanse Shawls, Table Cloths, Carpets, glaze Furnitures, remove stains and mildews from cotton and linen goods, &c. &c.

JAMES JACOBS, Agent
No. 11, Arcade, Providence.

* * *

(March 26, 1831)

NEW YORK DYING AND PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT

Office for the reception and delivery of goods, No. 11. Arcade. They Dye and Finish in a superior manner.

BROADCLOTHS: CRAPES
CASSIMERES: COTTON & LINEN
SILKS & SATINS: GOODS,
VELVETS,: HOSIERY, &c.

They also Dye and Cleanse Ladies' and Gentlemen's Garments of all descriptions; and in particular, their method of restoring old and faded Silks and Satins to their original beauty, has given general satisfaction.

They cleanse Shawls, Table Cloths, Carpets, &c. and remove stains and mildew from cotton and linen goods. Parasols dyed on the sticks.

All orders carefully attended to, by

JAMES JACOBS, Agt. 11 Arcade

Packages will be forwarded once a week through the season.

It thus appears that Jacobs operated simultaneously a carpet business at Number 11 Arcade and a wholesale dry goods business at Number 6 Arcade. There were many advertisements during this period describing the merchandise in these establishments. Not infrequently several advertisements would appear in a single edition of the paper. The following published on March 30, 1831 is a typical example:

*According to David C. Adelman (*RIJHN* 3:148, [No. 3] Dec., 1960) John Nathan "was the first Jewish advertiser [1844] and apparently the first cleanser." There is thus reason to doubt both of these assertions.

JAMES JACOBS

WHOLESALE DRY GOODS STORE, NO. 6 Arcade

Will open this morning, bales of Russia Diapers, 100 groce Ladies' Buttons; best quality black Italian Sewing Silk; Colored Linen Thread, &c. &c.

Manufacturers and dealers in Dry Goods will find an assortment of desirable goods at the establishment, the whole of which are fresh, and have been purchased at the late package sales in New York, and will be sold at the low prices as can be had in that city.

On June 8, 1831 a cotton factory in Glens Falls, New York was advertized for sale. Information could be obtained from the factory or inquiries made either in New York City or from James Jacobs at Number 6 Arcade! On July 2 he advertized two bales of twilled jeans "for sale by the piece only." On other occasions he offered "Ladies' printed Cotton Hose, low priced" and "Corded Shirts", gloves, hosiery, threads, "Gilt Buttons of every description", and many other items.

The prestige of the Slater Mills is reflected in the following (January 1, 1833): "Always on hand, a supply of those very fine Shirtings (in flat and linen folds) manufactured by Samuel Slater, Esq. at the Steam Mill in this city." Steam, it would appear, was already challenging the water power of the historic Slater Mill in Pawtucket.*

On October 5, 1831 the following advertisement listed items in a newly arrived shipment of merchandise:

JAMES JACOBS, Wholesale Dry Goods Dealer, No. 6 Arcade, has this day received from New York, 25 packages fresh imported seasonable Goods, which with his stock on hand, (all of which has been recently purchased) makes his assortment very extensive and are offered on the most favorable terms, among which are

2 cases Merino Circassians, desirable colors,
2 do common do do do,
2 do black and colored Bombezett
Bales assorted red, white and yellow Flannel
Do fine scarlet; 5 bales Bedticking
2 cases colored Cambric
Black and slate Worsted Hose
Fancy Random do new style
Prints, of every style and price
Blue, black, olive and brown Broadcloths, Satinets, &c. &c.

*Professor William G. McLoughlin of Brown University states: "Samuel Slater built the first large steam-driven cotton mill in 1827 in Providence. At first, steam engines merely provided power in the summer, when streams were low and the water wheels did not turn as fast as desired. But manufacturers soon discovered that steam engines were efficient all year around." (*Rhode Island, A Bicentennial History*. W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., New York and American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, 1978. P. 122.

In the Providence Directory of 1832 James Jacobs's establishment was listed at Number 10 Arcade and his business as "dry goods". His residence at that time was at Dorrance and Pine Streets. Also listed was Samuel Jacobs, doing business in "dry goods" at the same location, and residing on High Street. This is the only time that Samuel appears in the Directory. In fact it was, but for one strange exception, as we shall see later, the last listing for either James or Samuel.

During August and September of 1832 James appears to have had another location in the Arcade (*Providence Daily Journal*, September 14, 1832):

JAMES JACOBS
WHOLESALE DEALER, NO. 8, ARCADE

OFFERS on the most accommodating terms, every variety of brown and bleached domestic cottons, by the package or piece. Just received 5 cases Slater's Superior Steam Loom Shirting. Also 5 bales red, white, and yellow flannels.

Jacobs continued to advertize through 1833, but his advertisements often were shorter. On April 9, 1833 he noted that his "Wholesale Store" at Number 10 Arcade would offer "a desirable style of Prints. Also, Damask and Cotton Diaper and Table Cloths of all sizes."

A new item appeared in May of 1833 in the way of "1,000 Palmleaf Fans at Wholesale." There was, perhaps a fateful warning when on July 23 Jacobs offered for sale "30 Shares in The Arcade Bank" and "11 do do in The Arcade Corporation".

The following advertisement appearing in The *Providence Daily Journal* of August 30, 1833 provides an intriguing glimpse at modes of transportation. (There were two other brief insertions in the same issue, also offering dry goods at Number 10 Arcade):

WHOLESALE DRY GOODS STORE
No. 10 Arcade

James Jacobs is receiving by steam-boat and wagons, daily, additions to his well assorted stock.

Through most of 1833 and as late as December 30 the *Providence Daily Journal* carried advertisements of James Jacobs's wholesale dry goods establishment at No. 10 Arcade. On January 13, 1834, apparently for the first time, Samuel Jacobs, who, it will be remembered, had been listed in the 1832 directory as being in business at the same address, inserted a brief advertisement stating "REMAINING a few pieces co'd black and blue black Gro de Swiss, Poult de Soie and other silks to be sold low at No. 7 Arcade. SAMUEL JACOBS" On the next day (Janu-

ary 14) Samuel advertized that he would retail "at reduced prices" at No. 7 Arcade the stock from the store at No. 10 Arcade. A long list of merchandise followed. In the same issue the following appeared:

NOTICE—The subscriber having received from JAMES JACOBS, an assignment of his stock of Foreign and Domestic Piece Goods, Debts, &c. has appointed James Jacobs, his Attorney to close the business. The Stock of goods will be sold at reduced prices, offering an opportunity to any person wishing to purchase the whole or part, on very advantageous terms. Country dealers, factory agents and others, will do well to call and see, before purchasing. All persons indebted are called upon to make settlement as soon as possible, to Mr. JACOBS at No. 10 Arcade.

JOHN F. DYER, Assignee

On January 18, 1834 Samuel Jacobs was advertizing merchandise at both Nos. 7 and 10 Arcade, while John F. Dyer advertized the Providence Carpet Warehouse, which had formerly been Jacobs's establishment. On April 23 the following appeared:

TO PROPRIETORS OF HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES

JAMES JACOBS offers at reduced prices, a variety of extra large damask table cloths suitable for public houses, at No. 10 Arcade.

A variety of advertisements appeared during the next several weeks:

(May 13, 1834)

JAMES JACOBS will offer for a few days longer, his stock of Dry Goods at wholesale. There are yet many desirable articles which will be sold a great bargain, to close the stock.

ALSO FOR SALE

50 shares in the Arcade Bank,
11 shares in the Arcade Corporation,
5 shares in the Boston and New York Steam Boat Co.
1 lot on Broadway, Federal Hill, in the rear of the residence of Joseph Grant, Esq.
400 acres of land, near the Borough of Vincennes, Indiana, of an excellent quality, and in a good settlement.
Also—several lots in the Borough of Vincennes.

* * *

(June 10, 1834)

VALUABLE SALE OF DRY GOODS AT AUCTION.

The subscriber will close at auction, at his store No. 6 Arcade, on WEDNESDAY, the 18th inst. his entire stock of Foreign and Domestic Piece Goods, consisting of a well selected variety of seasonable Dry Goods.

This opportunity will offer to merchants in the country, many advantages for replenishing their stores with desirable articles. The sale will be without reserve and great bargains may be expected.

JAMES JACOBS

* * *

(June 20, 1834)

NOTICE. The sale of Dry Goods advertised by the subscriber, to take place on the 18th inst. is postponed to Wednesday 25th, at the same place, No. 6 Arcade.

JAMES JACOBS,
Attorney

While we have not documented the meaning of all of this obscure maneuvering, it is clear that significant changes were taking place in the mercantile career of James Jacobs. He had abundant competition from old and established Yankee merchants such as Gladding, Weeden, Buffington, Burr, Tillinghast, Olney, and John F. Dyer, who was close at hand at Numbers 16 and 6 Arcade. Undoubtedly, with the rapid turnover of merchandise, his credit would have been under considerable strain.

The following ominous advertisement appeared in the *Providence Daily Journal* as early as August 30, 1834 and ran until February of 1835:

NEW CARPET STORE
C B ARNOLD & CO.

Having purchased of Mess Jacobs & Co their entire stock of *Carpeting, Rugs, Table and Piano Cloths* and taken the store No. 46 Westminster Street, a few doors west of the Arcade, solicit the patronage of the former customers of the store, their friends, and the public.

NB They will continue to keep a general assortment of French and American *Paper Hangings* and Borders, of the latest fashions, at their old stand No. 61 Weybosset Street, for sale at reasonable prices.

Also on August 30, 1834, the following appeared:

REMOVAL

JOHN F. DYER has purchased the entire stock of Dry Goods in the store formerly Cheney's, which in addition to his own has removed to the large and continuous store No. 6 Arcade, formerly occupied as a carpet warehouse; both stocks will ensure to persons in want of rich fancy and Dry Goods, a selection greater and more desirable than has been exhibited in this city, and to which additions are made almost daily.

J. F. Dyer will be assisted by Mr. Samuel Jacobs.

The former customers of each concern are particularly invited to continue their accounts and the same exertions to give satisfaction will be continued. Every description of Goods usually kept in a Furnishing Warehouse can be obtained as above.

On January 1, 1835 the following brief notice appeared in the *Providence Daily Journal*:

STOCK OF DRY GOODS FOR SALE

A small stock contained in one of the best stands in the city, will be sold on favorable terms. For further information inquire at the Journal counting room.

Soon thereafter the following notices, which clearly signalled the end for Jacobs, were inserted in the issue of January 19, 1835:

NOTICE—The *Stock of Dry Goods* Store in No. 4 Arcade is offered at prime cost—among which may be found almost every article usually called for in the Dry Goods line. Persons wishing to purchase goods at great bargains are requested to call and examine for themselves.

* * *

NOTICE—Persons indebted to Jas. Jacobs or Jno F. Dyer for carpeting goods from the old Providence Carpet and trimming establishment are requested to make immediate payment, as it is desirable to close the affairs of that business with dispatch. Any demands against that establishment will be paid by the subscriber, when presented.

JNO F DYER,
No 6 Arcade

While John F. Dyer in 1832 had a dry goods shop at Number 4 Arcade, early in January of 1835, according to his advertisements, he was doing business at Number 6 Arcade, which had been the location of Jacob's wholesale dry goods emporium.

The story of Jacobs's entrepreneurial endeavors is typical of that of many early Jewish merchants. He came to a small town in New England anxious to be absorbed into the business community. He advertized lavishly and somewhat flamboyantly for his day and announced on numerous occasions the arrival of abundant new merchandise from New York, the center of commerce. He would dispose of his stock and at times change his location, sometimes under a different business name. He conducted at least two businesses simultaneously. His struggles undoubtedly involved the need for capital, competition from well-known establishments, and surely the exigencies of the business cycle.

That Jacobs did not survive in the business community is quite clear. Was he then not a "Jewish settler" in Providence? Did his departure from the scene make him less significant historically? Or indeed was he Jewish? We do not know for sure, but the suspicion is strong that he was.

EPILOGUE

James (and Samuel) Jacobs appeared in the Providence Directory of 1832. Both were absent from the next edition, that of 1836-7. Was this the last of James Jacobs? Not quite. Once again in the issue of 1852-3, after a lapse of twenty years, James Jacobs was listed as dealing in "carpets" at 129 Westminster Street. His lodging was given as City Hotel. Was this an apparition from the past or one last go at the old stand? To this enigma history does not provide an answer.

SOURCES

Providence City Directories, 1824 to 1853 published by Brown and Danforth and successors. Rhode Island Historical Society.

Providence Daily Journal, 1830-1835, microfilm files, Rhode Island Historical Society and Providence Public Library.

MEMOIR OF MY LIFE

by BEZALEL NATHAN RESNIK*

CHAPTER I—MY LIFE IN EUROPE

Since my children have had no opportunity, with one exception, of meeting anyone of their father's family, nor have they any idea of the kind of life our Jewish people led in eastern Europe in the first two decades of this century, I have decided to put into writing as much as I can recall of my life. I sincerely hope that they and their children will enjoy reading my recollections and thereby get to know more of our recent past.

BIRTH

I first saw the light of day on March 15, 1891, or *Adar* 16, according to the Jewish calendar, in the city of Vilna, Lithuania, a province of Czarist Russia. My father's name was Yakov,** my mother's was Deborah Abramovitch, and I was their eldest child.

My father, who had studied at the famous *yeshivah**** of Volozin, headed in his day by Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berlin, was a *shohet*.† He was too soft-hearted to continue in that profession; so he opened a food store. He remained a lover of books, a dreamer, and running the store became my mother's task, which she fulfilled with great ability.

My city, Vilna, was outstanding in many ways. The *Kehillah*,†† the organized Jewish community, paid the tuition for the Jewish children in the government-run elementary school. The Jewish children attended this school daily during their release time from the *heder*,††† the Jewish school. In the government school they were taught to read and write Russian and arithmetic. In my time the principal and teacher of that school was Pieter Margolin, a graduate of one of the two rab-

*As of this writing Mr. Resnick is alive and well in his eighty-eighth year. This account is edited from the original manuscript. A limited number of bound, printed copies were distributed to members of the family. It contains a fairly complete genealogy dating back to the 18th century. This has been omitted because of space limitations. This version is printed with the kind permission of the author and of the American Jewish Archives, which provided us with a copy of the original typescript. Ed.

**Jacob.

***Hebrew academy. (Hebrew)

†Ritual slaughterer. (Hebrew)

††Hebrew.

†††Hebrew school. (Hebrew)

binical schools run by the government, one in Zhitomir in the Ukraine and the other in Vilna.

The underlying aim of these two schools was to prepare leaders for the sole purpose of assimilating the Jewish population into the Russian culture by weaning their children away from Jewish learning and general way of life. I recall how displeased our teacher was at the sight of the *tzitzis*,* fringes, peeping out from the little boys' shirts. Mr. Margolin would invariably grasp one of the fringes, twist it around his finger, give a tug, and while pulling it off entirely, would remark with scorn, "pig's tails".

ENTERS YESHIVAH

At the age of twelve I entered the well-known Ramyles Yeshivah. There we were taught Talmud and the secular subjects usual for a high school curriculum, but, I am afraid, far different from any high school known today in America. Our teacher for these subjects was Mr. Kahn, who was also a product of the afore-mentioned rabbinical school. While thoroughly assimilated into the Russian culture, he yet loved the Hebrew language and was the author of a textbook of Hebrew grammar written in Russian.

We were expected to be able to translate the Prophets into Russian. One outstanding Hebrew scholar known in Russian as the *Uchoney Yevrei*—the Hebrew scholar—visited our *yeshivah* one day. Feivel Getz, the visitor, was also the official censor of Hebrew and Yiddish books and newspapers. I remember well the day of his visit as he handed me a text from the Book of Samuel in Hebrew and heard me translate it at sight.

All through my early years, and even today, I have loved reading. Since the age of eight I have read everything I could lay my hands on—Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. Even on the Sabbath, when I was supposed to have gone to the synagogue, I really went to the public library and passed the time browsing through Russian books. I finished studies at the *yeshivah* when I was fourteen and found myself, while well versed in Jewish learning, yet unprepared for practical life. The reasons were simply this:

All schools of higher learning, even the gymnasia, were closed to Jews. Some wealthy Jews hired private tutors to give their children the equivalent of preparation for matriculation abroad, but this obviously

*Fringes of the prayer shawl worn by males. (Yiddish) *Tzitzit* (fringes) in Hebrew.

was the solution for only a small segment of the Jewish population. The vast majority could not indulge in that method.

Luckily for me, at about that time one of my father's brothers, who lived in Kovno, came for a visit. Uncle Abraham Rosenthal was a very religious man. While he had three daughters, he had no sons and yearned for one. He suggested to my father that I go with him to Kovno, where I could attend a very famous *yeshivah* of higher learning. As for my support, he undertook to share that expense along with his brother, my uncle Leib Zlotoyabko. It was very kind of him, of course, and I was deeply appreciative. Yet later I found out that he had a reason for his kindness. It will seem unbelievable to a modern reader, but it was not unusual for that time. My uncle firmly believed that the Almighty would reward him by granting him the fulfillment of his heart's desire—a son. Strange as it may seem, his wife did indeed give birth to a son several years later. I had never had the opportunity to meet the boy; but many years later in 1967, on one of my visits to Israel, I learned that my cousin had migrated to Israel, where he died some years later. Sad to say, by 1967 his son, born in Israel, had also died. He lost his life during the Six Day War, leaving a young widow and two children. I managed to meet her and left a gift of money, a custom that I followed for several years.

At the time my uncle came to Vilna, the revolutionary movement in Russia had become widespread and many Jewish young people were drawn into it. But as far as I was concerned, the fact that their program included atheism and anti-Jewish feeling of all kinds kept me from joining the otherwise enticing movement. Zionism, however, appealed very strongly to me. I recall vividly the one and only visit of the revered Doctor Theodore Herzl to Russia in 1904. On his way to St. Petersburg, the later Petrograd and now Leningrad, he stopped off at Vilna. So great was the outpouring of the Jewish population who wanted at least to see the great leader that the police became alarmed and forbade him and his entourage to stop and speak with anyone. They simply hustled him off to the railroad station.

YESHIVAH AT KOVNO

Needless to say, my uncle's proposition was eagerly accepted, and I became a student in the *Slobodker Yeshivah*, where I spent three impressionable and unforgettable years. As I have remarked, the revolutionary feeling was very strong, especially among the young idealists. After all, what was there for the Jew in Russia to keep him a loyal

subject of the Czarist regime? It kept him from all avenues of higher education, from every opportunity of economic or professional advancement. All doors were closed to him; he was forbidden to become even a simple farmer, to hold any civil service job. There was no Jewish policeman, no Jewish letter carrier, nor a Jewish janitor. He was not simply a second-class citizen, he was no citizen at all. He had no freedom of movement and was restricted to live in a narrow belt known as the "Pale of Settlement."

What then kept me, a young impressionable Jewish boy, who was fully aware of all the discrimination suffered by his people and who dearly loved his people, from becoming involved in this great upswing of revolutionary thought? That movement promised to overthrow the oppressor and free the Jew along with the rest of the population. What then kept me from becoming a leftist? Perhaps the following paragraphs will give a clue to this enigma.

Arriving at the *yeshivah* in Kovno, I was immediately confronted by a different climate from that to which I was accustomed in my native Vilna. Vilna was a large progressive city, with many schools, several public libraries, museums, newspapers (Russian, and the Hebrew daily "Hazman"), theaters (Russian and Yiddish), and many publishing houses, the most famous of which was the Hebrew one known by the name, "Widow and Brothers Rome". There was also a monthly Yiddish literary periodical called "The World", whose editor, the famous Shmuel Niger, was later connected with the Yiddish press in New York. It was one of the early spots where Zionism had taken hold, grew, and flourished. Conversely, it was also the cradle of the "Bund", a Jewish revolutionary movement. It was also a great industrial and economic center.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF VILNA

At this point it may be of interest to the reader to learn something about the history of this unusual Jewish community which, to our sorrow, is no longer in existence. For this purpose I shall give, in translation, an excerpt from the *Jewish Popular Encyclopedia* by Doctor Simcha Petrushka. It may, in part, explain my nostalgia for the city of my birth:

"Vilna belonged to Lithuania, then to Russia, then to Poland. At the outbreak of the War of 1939 (World War II) it had about 250,000 inhabitants, among them more than 100,000 Jews. Jews have lived in

Vilna from as early as the 15th century. Despite repeated massacres, persecutions, and wars, Vilna became an outstanding spiritual center of Judaism and became known as 'The Jerusalem of Lithuania'. Famous were the great Lithuanian rabbis and scholars. In the 17th century there were the Rabbis Moshe Lema and Moshe Rivkes, authors of great rabbinic books, and in the 18th century Rabbi Eliyahu (the *Vilner Gaon**), the most famous of them all. It was his disciples who created the great center of Jewish learning in that city. Even at a later date there were famous scholars in Lithuania, such as Rabbi Israel Salanter, Rabbi Bezalel Hacohen, Rabbi Shmuel Strashun, and others.

"It was in Lithuania that at the beginning of the 19th century the *Haskalah*** movement started in Russia, and its leaders were Adam Hacohn Levensohn, Mordche Aaron Ginzburg and others. Vilna had many synagogues, many of them extremely old. The most famous of them was the *Goan's* synagogue. In these places of worship there were many *yeshivahs* that produced thousands of scholars. Vilna was also rich in Jewish philanthropic institutions and secular schools, libraries—private and public—such as the Strashun Library and Yivo. At the end of the 19th century Vilna became the center of the *Chibat-Zion**** movement and later of political Zionism as well as for the Hebrew press and literature. Vilna had also been a center for Jewish publications. The most famous is the *Vilner Sha'as* (Talmud) edition with commentaries.

"At the end of the 19th century Jewish socialism had its beginnings in Vilna, and it was here that the 'Bund' was born. There were Socialist newspapers in the Yiddish language, later the Yiddish theater with its 'Vilner Troupe' came into being. This city was the center of the Yiddish language and culture; it had many public schools, a Hebrew gymnasium, a technical school, a teacher's seminary, the Yivo, and its priceless archives.

"The studies about Vilna are too numerous to mention.

"In 1942-43 the Jewish population of Vilna perished through the horrendous crimes of the Hitler hordes that took possession of the city in the summer of 1941."

**Gaon* is Hebrew for "Excellency". A leading scholar.

**Hebrew for "Enlightenment". Movement among the Jews of Eastern Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries to acquire modern European culture and secular knowledge.

***"Love of Zion". (Hebrew) The romantic movement which developed in sharp reaction to the Russian pogroms of 1881-82. It advocated return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and the soil.

Picture me then, at fifteen years of age, suddenly being thrown into the strict *yeshivah* atmosphere of Slobodka, a close, rigidly religious world, isolated from modern life in all its phases. I had already by that time become acquainted with the best of Yiddish and Russian literature, as well as modern Hebrew literature, all of which was absolutely taboo there.

My fellow students had come mostly from the small towns of the great Russian empire and were completely unacquainted with the world at large.

LIFE AT THE YESHIVAH OF KOVNO

The principal, known as the *Rosh Yeshivah*,* was the great scholar Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein. The instructor in *Musar* (Ethics)** was Rabbi Nosen Finkel, a great thinker and philosopher. He was a disciple of the famous Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, the founder of the School of Ethics, the personal conduct of the individual. It was his concept that, by simply obeying the law and not committing an act for which one is liable to punishment, one is not necessarily thereby an ethical person. It is in refraining from doing aught that one knows is wrong or immoral, even if the act does not involve possible punishment, that puts one in the category of the righteous. Pride, for instance, was abhorred. Even performing a *mitzvah*,*** i.e. a good deed, publicly so that all may see and praise, was considered unethical.

He strongly advocated the paying of attention to one's appearance, cleanliness of person and attire, as well as good and proper behavior. He believed that the reason many Jews were not religious stemmed from the fact that they were ignorant of the Torah† and its teaching.

An interesting story has come down to our own day that aptly depicts Rabbi Salanter's great love of his people. It is told that an epidemic of cholera had broken out in Vilna. It was the Rabbi's belief that people in a weakened condition, such as those who fast, would be more apt to become ill. So he handled the matter in his own inimitable way. That Yom Kippur after the *shaharith*‡ prayer, he stood on the pulpit

*Head of the *Yeshivah*. (Hebrew)

**Hebrew.

***Literally "commandment". (Hebrew)

†The Five Books of Moses, or all of Jewish law and religious studies. (Hebrew)

‡Morning prayer. (Hebrew)

of the synagogue and loudly commanded the *shamash** (sexton) to bring him a cup of wine. He then recited the *kiddush*** and ordered the congregation to go home and eat and then return to the synagogue for the remainder of the Yom Kippur service. This story has become famous, as related by the Hebrew writer David Frischman. Not all of the rabbis, however, agreed with this attitude, and he had many opponents.

A decision such as this, made by a man as deeply religious and God-fearing as Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, surely requires great knowledge of all the laws pertaining to such a condition, and an inner greatness and resolution that few people, even the rabbis, possess.

TEACHINGS OF THE YESHIVAH

I think it would be worthwhile at this point to describe some of the lessons we were required to learn in the *yeshivah* following the great rabbi's method of teaching:

1. The path of life for a truly good man consists of constant self-improvement in the matter of caring for one's fellow man.

2. All acts that are caused by egotism or self-aggrandizement, are to be avoided, and all inclinations leading to pride are to be suppressed. Cruelty of all kinds, whether toward another human being or a dumb creature, is to be avoided. Most important of all, one is to perform all these acts with absolutely no expectation of reward or even a 'thank you', for the very words, 'thank you', already give compensation for the action. Every night, at the close of the day's activities, one is required to examine one's actions and even thoughts of the day and determine whether he has lived up to that lofty teaching. If a slip is discovered, he must decide to correct it the next day and resolve never to repeat that faulty action, tiny though it may have been.

Obviously, this philosophy of life was not an easy one, and not everyone could hope to follow it. I have endeavored to follow as much of it as I could.

The entire atmosphere in the *yeshivah* was one of isolation, a total detachment from the work-a-day world around us. Our days and even

*Hebrew.

**Literally "sanctification". (Hebrew) The prayer and ceremony that sanctifies the Sabbath and Jewish holy days. More specifically the blessing over wine on the Sabbath or holy days.

nights were spent in study. We not only tried to increase our fund of knowledge of the Talmud, but also took into account the type of living that was held up to us as ideal.

I left the *yeshivah* when I was about eighteen years old and returned to my home town, Vilna. There, feeling the need of furthering my secular education, I hired a private teacher. This man, a pharmacist out of a job, gave me lessons in Latin, Russian literature, and mathematics. This went on for about two years, during which time I in turn gave lessons in Hebrew and thus earned my living. It was customary for Jews living in villages and small towns to come to Vilna to get an instructor in Hebrew and other related subjects for their children, and I was one of the young men who fulfilled that need.

In 1912 I was called up for the army, but upon my physical examination it was discovered that I had myopia. Consequently I was placed in the second reserve, which meant that I would be called on to serve only during an emergency. It was lucky for me that I was called in the year 1912, as the very next year myopia was not considered sufficient reason for exemption.

With this blue certificate in my pocket, I then began to look around for means of earning a livelihood. Fortunately for me a stationery store became available at the "right price", because the owner who had purchased it for his daughter was forced to sell, as she had no inclination for that kind of business. I therefore bought it for the magnificent sum of twenty-five rubles.

START OF BUSINESS CAREER

Here, in my first business venture, I spread my wings. First of all I increased my stock, added magazines and newspapers, and then obtained a permit to turn it into a book store, a much more lucrative business. Since there were eight schools in the vicinity, I stocked textbooks and school materials. The pupils in school were not supplied by the schools, but were required to make these purchases on their own.

This store developed into a fine, though small, enterprise. I ventured into carrying small musical instruments such as balalaikas and mandolins. I stocked picture postcards and even started a lending library. The best customer of the library was *its owner*.

There had been rumors and talk of war for about two years. These rumors increased and spread daily, until by this time, war became a

certainty. We daily saw transports of soldiers stopping at the station. Soldiers would stop a short while, overrun the stores in the vicinity, clamoring for food and hot water with which to make their tea. One must understand that this was the only way they got their necessities while en route to their destinations. My store was right next to a sausage store. The soldiers would get their pork sausages there and then come to me to purchase indelible pencils, writing paper, and picture postcards to send home. Since pens required ink, which was impossible to use while traveling, the indelible pencil was the only answer. As a small insight into the kind of life that was lived at that time, I need only mention that my neighbor, the sausage man, would wipe off the green mold from the sausages with a cloth dipped in oil (naturally there was no refrigeration of any kind).

WAR BREAKS OUT

Then it happened! In August of 1914 the Germans marched eastward. The first casualties were those provinces nearest to the border. Jews in those towns were evacuated eastward. The Russian Czarist government considered its Jewish population untrustworthy and was afraid that they would spy for the Germans. The following year, on Yom Kippur, the German army entered Vilna. The night before the invasion a strange warning made the rounds. No one knew where it originated, but everybody obeyed: that Jewish young men should not go to the synagogue for the *Kol Nidrei** service. It was believed that the Russian army people would enter the synagogue to round up the young men for army service.

That *erev*** Yom Kippur morning I had a frightening experience. My Uncle Leib had been expelled from Kovno along with all the other Jews there, and he had come to Vilna. He lived not far from us, and I was on my way home after visiting my uncle's family. Suddenly I was stopped by a Russian policeman and ordered to follow him to the police station. Realizing the danger of the situation (of being taken into the Russian army and shipped eastward) I gave him thirty kopeks, all the money that I had with me. For this paltry sum, the price of three packages of cigarettes, I bought my freedom and my life, and am here to tell the story!

*The prayer ushering in the Yom Kippur Service. (Hebrew)

**Literally "Eve". The holiday begins at sunset. Consequently the morning of that day. (Hebrew)

GERMAN OCCUPATION

The next morning, Yom Kippur, we were drawn by curiosity to the center of the city, and there, in front of the City Hall, we saw German soldiers, now in full possession of the city. We then understood that they had entered during the night without firing a shot! The Russians had retreated, and Vilna was now conquered territory.

All private business dealings stopped abruptly. The Germans took away all raw materials and all the merchandise they could find use for. My business ended completely. All the schools had been evacuated to Russia; and whoever wished to study changed over to the German or Polish language. In order to earn some money I obtained a job with the census bureau, but it didn't last long.

Since most of the doctors had been mobilized by the Russian army, many towns remained without medical service. In our section the Germans sent in a military doctor twice a week for the civilian population. Knowing German, I secured employment as interpreter and record-keeper for the doctor. My pay was one and a half marks a day. (The price of bread was two marks a pound). Later on the Germans, fearing an epidemic of typhoid fever, opened a school on the German border where people were instructed in the prevention of the spread of disease. Two people were chosen from each district to take these instructions, and the "Amtsforshter"* (the representative of the German military government to the civil population) selected me as the one from our district. He thereby proved to be my own "good angel", for by doing so he enabled me to meet my future wife.

I was given a permit to travel and a railroad ticket, and I arrived in the small border town of Kretinga where such a school was located. Each one of our group was assigned quarters in a private home. I was placed in the home of Zundel and Minna Priest and their two daughters.

The method followed was for each of the students to be housed and fed during his course of study, six weeks, and the German government compensated the householder for that expense. At the end of the course each of us received a certificate, and we were ready for our duties as members of the medical corps.

In the meantime I had kept my eyes open and noticed that the town offered unusual business opportunities. Since it was a border town and merchandise passed through on the way from Germany, there

**Amtsvorsteher*. (German)

were many potential customers for each item. I bought what I could and, having a travel permit, was able to sell my goods in Vilna. Because all items of daily use were scarce, it netted me a good profit. In time I accumulated a goodly sum of money.

CAUGHT UP BY THE WAR

When I disclosed to my father that I was interested in a young lady in whose father's house I had been lodging, he came back with me in order to meet her family. With his approval we made plans to get married right after the war. Unfortunately, the war for that entire region did not end so quickly. On the last trip the train that usually took me to Vilna turned around and went back to Germany. We stopped in Tilsit. I continued my journey through Germany and came out at Verballen, a town near Kovno. I thought I could take a train there direct to Vilna, but this train, too, traveled only half way. The Russians were on the march to overtake the Poles and retake Vilna.

The other merchants, three in number, and I hired a sled and its driver (it was winter time) in an effort to get to Vilna. We could not travel along the main highway because the Russian army was on that road and we certainly were not anxious to meet up with them. Our driver, trying to avoid the Russians, took side roads, and so we traveled on for a couple of hours until we were spotted by a Russian patrol. "Stoy!" (stop) he yelled, "Where are you going?" "Do you have any guns?" We naturally did not have any guns and said so. "Well," he said, "let's go to the commandant." As the soldier was riding on a horse and he *did* have a gun, we had no choice in the matter but to follow him. Everyone of us, we were all "in the same boat", had merchandise which he hoped to sell in Vilna, and that was absolutely forbidden under the Russian rule. I do not know what would have happened to us had we gotten to the commandant.

Again we were saved by a good angel, and unbelievably the angel was in the form of a horse! We arrived in the town where the commandant was stationed in tow of the armed soldier, and started climbing the steep hill on top of which the house stood. At that moment we saw a horse hitched to a long sled, without a driver, running down the hill, zigzagging wildly, apparently out of control. Realizing the danger we were in, all of us, including the soldier, ran down to a side street in an attempt to avoid clashing with the horse, we on one side of the road and the soldier on the other. Our drivers, being natives of the neighborhood, knew all the highways and byways. Seeing that they

were rid of the soldier, they quickly turned the horses on to another road, whipped them up, and we were on an alternate road to Vilna.

ESCAPE

But we were not yet "out of the woods". After that fortunate escape from the Russian soldier, we came upon a second one who asked the same questions and received the same answers. Only this one wanted to know whether we had some sugar, which we did not have. But we got the message, and each of us gave him some item out of his stock; I for instance gave him warm underwear. He took whatever each one gave him and rode off with the warning, over his shoulder, that we should be sure to hide whatever weapons we might be carrying. We sighed with relief at his departure, and suddenly realized that we were tired and hungry. It was getting dark, and we began to look around for an inn or some other place where we might spend the night. What happened next seemed like a nightmare, and I still can't believe it actually happened.

We came upon an inn which we knew was run by a Jew, but when we got nearer to the place we saw that the door was locked. One of us knocked on the door, requesting the right to enter. A childish voice from within called out that the parents, who ran the inn, were away and had instructed the children, whom they left behind, not to open the door for anyone until they returned.

To all of us this seemed so natural and reasonable that we immediately turned aside and were ready to continue on our way, disappointed though we were. Inexplicably, one of our number, perhaps he was a bit hungrier than the rest of us, shouted at the children, ordering them to open the door. Before we could stop him, he picked up some stones and began hurling them at the windows. The tinkling of shattering glass made my skin creep, so reminiscent was it of the sounds of pogroms. With all our might we pulled the man away from the house and hastily rode off.

We soon came upon a house in a nearby village, and the owner, a peasant, kindly permitted us to enter and immediately put some bread and tea on the table for us. We gladly accepted his hospitality and started to put the ugly episode at the inn out of our minds. Or so we thought!

Suddenly the loud clatter of horses' hooves was heard, and a man burst into the little cottage, brandishing his whip. He loudly demanded to know whether we were the "hooligans" who had broken his windows

and frightened his children. What could we do but admit the fact and plead for forgiveness? With understandable anger he shouted that we had better watch out, that he would report the matter to the police in Vilna in the morning. After he left, we furtively glanced out of the window, thinking that we might have a chance to make our escape during the night. To our horror we saw that there was a ring of armed peasants surrounding the house. All plans of escaping were abandoned. Who could then think of eating or sleeping, hungry and tired though we were!

Imagine our surprise and amazement then, when early in the morning we looked out the window and saw no one there! All the armed peasants, apparently, had gone sometime during the night. Why they had disappeared and what they planned to do about us I still can't figure out. We just left quietly, gratefully, and never heard about the incident again, but my career as a smuggler had definitely ended. Nothing could make me continue this "business", lucrative though it was. I realized that I was just not cut out to be a smuggler.

So as not to be conspicuous, we entered Vilna one by one on foot. I walked straight home, as I somehow had the feeling that this would probably be my last chance to see my family, conditions being so uncertain. I found only my mother at home and gave her 5,000 marks of the 9,000 that I had with me, and told her of my plans to get married.

ROMANCE AND MARRIAGE

Somehow I managed to get back to my fiancée by traveling through Germany. Then she and I decided to get married immediately; we had waited long enough. My intended, Fannie,* had a large family in town and many friends, but I, being a stranger, was all alone in that *shtetel*.** I therefore said that I wanted us to be married in Memel, a German city where many Jews had settled after the war. She consented, and I arranged to have the "Salanter *Rov*†", that is the former rabbi of Salant who was serving the city of Memel at the time, to perform the ceremony. He arrived with a *minyán*‡ at the hotel, the Berliner Hoff, where I had taken a room for a week, and he took charge. Since we had no veil for the bride, he led her over to the window and used the curtain as a veil.

*Feige in Yiddish.

**Village. (Yiddish)

†Rabbi. (Yiddish)

‡Ten male Jews necessary for a religious ceremony. (Hebrew)



Left to right: Fannie's Sister Haika, Fannie and Nathan Resnik, taken in Europe.

I tried upon our return to Kretinga to engage in business, but that was difficult. The country was small, and the Lithuanians, wanting any possible business for themselves, began to harrass the Jews. They made it virtually impossible for a Jew to succeed in any effort. Lithuania had received its independence from the Germans in 1916, but had practically no resources of its own. For, whatever I tried to do, I was obliged to travel to the capital city of Kovno to obtain a permit. For instance, I tried to purchase a carload of cigarettes imported from Holland, but after I obtained a permit I was told that it was already sold to another importer. I tried then to open a cinema, called a *kino* in Lithuania, in Kretinga and was told that the only electricity they could produce was needed to light the town and could not be "wasted" in running a house of amusement.

EMIGRATION

I became disgusted with the situation and proposed to my wife that we abandon Europe. Since I saw no future for us in the land of our birth, we should plan to emigrate to America. To this she readily agreed. Through the helpful efforts of good friends, we obtained passports in the city of Memel, at that time French occupied territory.

From there we went to the port city of Danzig, where there was an American consulate, and obtained visas for America. I had already received an affidavit from my wife's brother-in-law, Israel Sherman, of Providence, Rhode Island and so had little difficulty on that score. With these precious papers in our pockets we then proceeded to return to Memel, where there was a German consulate, in order to obtain transit visas for Germany, since we had to traverse that country in order to get to Antwerp, Belgium, where we were to embark on the ship for New York.

I still remember with gratitude the kindness of a man in Memel who was a perfect stranger to us. Mr. Yafschitz was a prominent businessman, who had had business dealings with an uncle of my wife's, Leib Mendelovitz. At Uncle Leib's request he used his influence "in the right places" and helped me procure the Memel passports. This was no small feat.

When we had returned to Memel from Danzig, we were required to apply for the transit visas but struck a snag at the German consulate. The consul refused to issue them, arguing that our passports read "Valid only for emigration to America." Almost in desperation I turned to



Nathan and Fannie Resnik.

Mr. Yafshitz, and this good man introduced me to a French official, Captain La Roche, who happened to be a personal friend of his. The captain took our passports, kept them for two days, during which time I imagine he communicated with his German counterpart in the German consulate, and then instructed us to return to the German office. This time there was no difficulty at all, and in short order the transit visas were in our possession.

How many kindnesses from practically total strangers did we receive! We now had all the important documents needed, and we were on our way to the "goldeneh medina",* the golden land of America!

CHAPTER II—MY LIFE IN AMERICA

We now entrained for Berlin, where we were to spend several days. The reason for this stopover is a story in itself.

Some friends of my in-laws had a young daughter who was about to travel to New York, where her fiance was waiting for her. As she had never been out of the town of her birth, her parents were reluctant to let her travel by herself and pleaded that we let her travel with us.

Naturally we consented. How could we know the trouble that this would bring us? We didn't know that she had no visa to travel across the Polish corridor, which we must traverse in order to get to Berlin from Memel. We soon found out, however, when we reached the border and Polish officials boarded the train to check the passengers for visas. While all our papers were in order, our young lady had none, and she was unceremoniously taken off the train. I just had time to advise her to turn her money over to me for safe keeping. (We had been warned that the officials confiscate all moneys found on such passengers). I also told her that we would be waiting for her in Berlin, even though at that moment I had no assurance that she would even be permitted to get there.

We arrived in Berlin late that night and had to worry about not only our luggage but hers as well. Early the following morning I ran to the Lithuanian consulate in Berlin and told my story, asking for advice and help in locating my charge. The answer was a shrug of the consul's shoulders and a cold stare. I then knew that it was up to me to find the girl.

*Literally, "golden country". *Medina* is Hebrew for "country" or "land". (Yiddish)

We then started haunting the railroad station, closely examining every train that passed. Unbelievably, we finally saw a train pull in in which we spotted her standing in the doorway of the train. We ran along the slowly moving cars and yelled to her but one word—"Friedrichstrasse"—the name of the station where we would meet her. She nodded understanding. We took the following train and, when we got to the Friedrichstrasse station, found her waiting for us.

We had other difficulties with her, but we did manage finally to get her safely into the hands of her fiance in New York. Their gratitude more than compensated us for the trouble we had gone through in her behalf.

INTERLUDE IN BERLIN

After that first worrisome day in Berlin we spent several days during which we allowed ourselves some relaxation—rightly deserved, we felt—and acted like "tourists". We saw the sights, even attended a performance of the *Merchant of Venice* under the direction of the famous Max Reinhardt. But we had very little pleasure from the performance, masterful though it was. I can still feel the waves of hatred permeating the audience as a result of the "Jewish" references made on the stage. It seemed as if the air was thick with it; we could almost touch it.

From Berlin we traveled straight on to Antwerp, Belgium, and there again we had to wait a few days until we could embark on our ship the *Kroomland* of the Red Star Line.

I have preserved and kept as a curiosity the printed passenger list and our passports. As we traveled second class we were spared much of the discomfort of the usual immigrant of that day. Only one humiliation we were not spared—that is, the disinfection of all our clothes. We ourselves, along with all the other passengers, had to take baths while our personal attire was given "the treatment."

Our sea voyage in the main was not unpleasant and lasted fifteen days. One bad experience was the rough sea of the English Channel crossing. We found the Channel thick with fog. I think I can still hear the blowing of the foghorns and the bells ringing that entire night through.

On the ocean trip we had our usual share of seasickness, but, compared with what I have heard other immigrants tell of their passage, our trip was pleasant and uneventful.

Among our experiences the most interesting was undoubtedly our introduction to new and strange foods. Who in Vilna had ever heard of cornflakes? We had to be told to pour milk in the bowl and eat it with a spoon, and found it surprisingly palatable.

ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

Upon our arrival in New York we did not have to go to Ellis Island because, as I have mentioned, we traveled second class. We were advised not to try to get to a hotel on our own as we knew no English and our money was in German marks and not in American dollars. The best thing to do, we were told, was to consult the representative of HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, who was present. We did so and were taken, along with the other Jewish immigrants, to HIAS headquarters. We were then asked our destination and whether we had the necessary funds to get there. I explained that I was not in need of money, as I would be able to exchange my German money the following day. To my surprise and chagrin, the next morning I was handed a telegram from relatives in Providence accompanied by \$25 for our use. It seems that the HIAS officials, disregarding that I said I had money, and without telling me, had notified Providence about our arrival, and the wire was the result!

I had the address of my Uncle Berel Abrams, my mother's brother, and so the very first thing I wanted to do was to make contact with him. The HIAS officials were reluctant to let us go off by ourselves; so they telephoned him. In the space of two hours he was there and brought us to his home in Brooklyn. What a thrill it was for me to meet again my mother's brother, whom I had seen but once in my life before. That happened when I was a very young child when he had come to take leave of my mother just before sailing for America.

We spent five days in his home; and he, his wife, and children showed us a bit of New York. We saw Coney Island and various parks and had the life-time thrill of climbing to the top of the then world's tallest edifice, the famous Woolworth Building in downtown New York.

One of my cousins took me to a bank where I was finally able to exchange one thousand German marks for the magnificent sum of fifteen American dollars! I still have about twelve thousand German marks in my possession.

LIFE IN PROVIDENCE BEGINS

After five wonderful days in New York my cousin drove me to Grand Central Station, where we took the train to Providence. When we arrived there both Mamie and Ida, my wife's sisters, were waiting at Union Station. We were taken to Ida's house and we stayed with her until just before *Pesach**, a space of about two weeks. For Passover we were invited to be with an uncle and aunt, Boruch and Chasa Riva Priest on Howell Street.

Passover morning Uncle Boruch and I attended services at the Ahavath Sholom Synagogue, the most beautiful synagogue I had seen till that time. I was particularly struck by its furnishings. I am happy to see that the fine *Aron Ha—Kodesh****, the Holy Ark, of the synagogue is still in use at the Mishkon Tfiloh Synagogue on Summit Avenue, where I see it every Saturday morning when I attend Sabbath services.

I recall with pleasure that my attire at that time was not at all like that of a "greener"†, and I was well received by the other worshippers to whom I was introduced by Uncle Boruch. One of them particularly pops up in my memory, Simon Klein, a friend of Feige's other uncle, Samuel Priest. Sam Priest and his family were most friendly to us, and he in particular proved himself a *real* uncle in every way, as I shall point out in the following pages.

Klein, on learning who I was, and that I was a new immigrant, asked me whether I had already seen my other uncle, Sam Priest. When I answered in the affirmative, he wanted to know whether my uncle had offered any assistance in getting me established in Providence. I told him that Priest had offered me a choice of either a job in his mill or his help in starting in business for myself, but that I had not yet made up my mind which offer to accept.

I can still see Klein's sly smile as he said, "Don't take any job! Go into business!" And that proved to be good advice.

Immediately after Passover we went to Mamie's house, where Herman, Boruch's son, introduced me to other relatives. Through his recommendation I managed to acquire two pupils for Hebrew tutor-

*Passover. (Hebrew)

**The shrine or closet in the synagogue in which the Scrolls of the Law are kept.

†Greenhorn. (Yiddish)

ing. During this time Alfred A. Fain, at the urging of Sam Priest, accompanied me while we inspected a number of empty stores with the intention of finding one that I might decide on to open as a grocery store. Since Fain was the owner of a wholesale grocery business, he was the logical person to help me to decide.

IN BUSINESS IN AMERICA

We finally settled on a store on Middle Street in Pawtucket, and Sam Priest, true to his promise, bought it for us for five hundred dollars. And so we were in business in America! What was more, there was a tenement in back of the store where we could and did make our home.

Early in June of 1915 we opened the store, not knowing the language of the country, the names of the items we were to buy and sell, or their prices. It took us about six months to realize that this was not "our cup of tea"; so I started looking around for something to do to augment our income.

On the same street, near the store, there was a spinning mill where several hundred people were employed in day and night shifts. This gave me an idea: These people must surely eat during lunch periods! I therefore went to the head office and inquired if I would be permitted to come and sell food to their employees. Think of the *chutzpa** of a greenhorn!

To my happy surprise permission was granted immediately, and I went to work. I discovered that the main items wanted by the people there were soda, chewing tobacco, cigarettes, candy, and similar items. And these things, then, were to be my stock in trade. I loaded myself with a case of 24 small bottles of soda, harnessed to my back and, together with the other items on my person, walked throughout the mill, upstairs and downstairs, both mornings and afternoons. After a while I was even permitted to use one of their "indoor trucks" to transport the loads. Since the truck could go into the elevators, I was relieved of the job of lugging the merchandise on my shoulders, and thus made my life a bit easier.

However, this did not last long. Across the street from the mill there was a rival store run by a man who begrudged me the business of the mill. He persuaded the elevator man, by what means I don't know, not

*Gall, brazen nerve, effrontery. (Hebrew)

to allow me to ride the elevator, so that I had to go back to lugging the loads again.

After a while the superintendent suggested to me that, as long as there were full facilities in the mill for cooking and serving meals, there was no reason not to take advantage of them and serve the men with real hot meals.

This indeed sounded sensible to me and a real opportunity. But the move entailed quite an undertaking, since neither my wife nor I had any knowledge of, or experience in the preparing of non-Jewish foods. We didn't even know what American non-Jewish people like to eat. We therefore had to hire a woman to prepare the food and even to decide on the menus. It was my job to purchase whatever she said was needed. I continued my soft drink project, which continued to be very profitable. The mill was kept at a high temperature because of the nature of the manufacture, and the men were always thirsty. Some weeks we sold from eighty to a hundred cases, and this was an enormous amount.

On the other hand, the dinner business was a ruination. We sold only about six or seven dinners a day. At the thirty-five cents a meal which we charged, the cost of the food plus the wages of the cook more than ate up the profits. So we decided to go into the mill at night also after we had closed the store for the day and serve the night shift. This proved to be financially profitable, since the cost of the cook remained the same as before, but it almost ruined our health. We then planned to close the store altogether and devote all of our time to the mill, but our good relative, who had done so much for us, advised very strongly against the move. We therefore continued working in the store and in the mill, totalling about seventeen to eighteen hours a day out of the twenty-four! We took it for about two years. Then, come hell or high water, we could take it no longer and quit the mill. We stayed on in the store until May of 1925, meanwhile looking around for another suitable business, but to our dismay were unsuccessful in our search.

At about this time a relative of Fannie's had difficulties with partners in his business and had to go through bankruptcy. Sam Priest, who held the mortgage on the business, suggested that I step in as a partner. I did so, and after six months we moved to Providence. We found a flat on Somerset Street in Providence after selling the store in Pawtucket.

We lived there for about a year and then moved to a nicer flat on Reynolds Avenue. It was there in 1930 that our first child, Sol Leon,

was born. From there we moved to Ontario Street; and there in 1934 our daughter, Beverly Ann, was born, and our family was complete.

EMBLEMS AND BADGES

My relative and I formed a corporation to manufacture emblems, medals, badges, and related items, and I was the one who made the capital investment needed to start the venture. In order to give the business a chance to become established, a clause was written into the bylaws that neither of us was to draw any salary for the first six months.

Imagine my dismay, then, when the very first Friday of our venture my partner threatened to leave and look for a job unless I permitted him to draw a weekly wage that very day and every week thereafter! This was the first of a long line of aggravations resulting from broken pledges and incompetence, and I soon realized that I had been "taken for a ride". As I was new to this sort of business I had no choice but to let him do so, even though I myself adhered to the agreement and drew no money for the six-month period.

After that initial breaking in period I started traveling to other cities by myself and acquired new customers, and thus enlarged the business. We had our ups and downs, but every time new money was needed for anything I was the one who had to supply it.

This situation continued until 1932, when I felt that I had had enough. I decided once and for all that I was through and urged my partner either to buy me out or sell to me. I was so anxious to sever the business relationship that I offered to give him more than I demanded for myself if he were to buy me out.

My presence in the business evidently was valuable enough to keep my partner from wanting to see me leave. I had to threaten to throw the business into receivership before he consented to buy my stock in the corporation and thus let me off the hook. This he finally did, and I was once again my own man.

ESTABLISHES OWN BUSINESS

So in 1933 I founded my own business and called it Emblem and Badge Manufacturing Company. Now, although I no longer own the company, the name Emblem and Badge still exists and stands for a prosperous and going concern, one with which people deal with confidence and satisfaction, exactly as I had established it so many years ago. This has given me no end of inner satisfaction.

On Richmond Street in Providence I found suitable premises for a small shop; and I acquired the necessary equipment, hired the necessary help, and started manufacturing. In 1934 I was able to buy out Arno Wrazlowsky's factory on 220 Eddy Street, which proved to be a good venture.

One of my first successful achievements was acquiring as a customer a large military supply house in New York. Just filling its orders was enough to keep me busy. In the year 1935 this one customer gave me over twenty thousand dollars worth of business, which was certainly a great sum for a small business such as mine. However, competitors quickly found out who my customer was and started to undersell me. They cut prices, which resulted in my losing that valuable account.

WORLD WAR II

By this time the world political situation had become uncertain, the breath of war was in the air, and the demand for military items increased. I soon was able to replace some of my lost business by getting smaller military firms as customers.

Fortunately I had bought about four thousand pounds of brass, which at this time was becoming difficult to obtain, and so had the necessary materials for manufacturing the insignia required.

In 1940 all copper stock was frozen by the government, and a declaration of amount on hand had to be submitted. The War Production Board permitted me to make use of this material for their insignia. After I had used up that reserve stock, and being unable to get a priority to purchase more, I was again in trouble.

In order to stay in business I had to shift to making costume jewelry. For this, however, we were to use only silver, and this material was allotted by the government to each individual manufacturer. I was allowed to purchase two thousand troy ounces of silver every three months, which kept me going through the war years.

In 1936 we had cashed in a life insurance policy and used the money to purchase a home at 96 Moore Street in Providence. That house was to be home for us during our children's growing-up years, their school years, and subsequent marriages.

All through the years I was in communication with my family in Lithuania and knew of the doings of the various members. My brother

Shmuel* had graduated from the Vilna Gymnasium and wanted to continue his studies so as to become an agronomist. He was accepted as a student in the University of Nancy, France, from which he was subsequently graduated. He remained in France for a while, having found work on various farms, even as far away as the island of Corsica, even though as a foreigner he could not get a formal work permit. (He was not the only foreigner who worked in France without a permit). However, he had the misfortune of becoming ill with appendicitis, had to undergo surgery, and then was told politely to leave France.

When I heard that he had returned to Vilna, I wrote to him urging him to come to America, naturally with my financial help, as the heavy war clouds seemed to hang over Europe. His letter, in which he refused to leave his home town, explained his reason all too clearly. He told of the hardships he had had during his student years in France in a country whose language and way of life were strange to him; how he had agonized trying to learn French well enough so that he could pursue his studies in that language, and after all that being forced to return to his native Lithuania and revert to his old life-style. He wrote:

“And now you suggest that I come to America, go through that agony again trying to learn yet another language, get used to yet another culture. No, brother, that is too much to ask from one lifetime. You would do better if you were to send for our youngest sister, Miriam. For her there is no future in Lithuania.”

This I did, and in 1937 my sister Miriam arrived. Besides myself, she is thus the only other member of my family to have escaped the Nazis. She lived with my family, and in 1943 Fannie and I had the pleasure of seeing her married. She now lives in New York and has two daughters. At this writing her daughter Dvorah is married and is the mother of two little girls. Needless to say, this is a source of great satisfaction to me. At least I have succeeded in saving one member of my family. Would that there had been more!

After the war the metal supplies were unfrozen, and the fever of the war jewelry trade came to a close. New fine jewelry was being manufactured by regular jewelry houses. The jobbers or dealers, who in the past had flocked to Providence, no longer needed to do so. From a seller's market it had turned into a buyer's market. There simply was not enough business to go around.

*Samuel.

In 1953 it came to our notice that a larger silver manufacturer in Connecticut was also manufacturing trophies. Until that time trophies were an expensive product, being made of real silver. However, now a line of inexpensive trophy items had begun to flood the market. The Connecticut firm found it impossible to compete with the cheaper line. They then decided to liquidate that portion of their business. A representative of the firm came to see me and offered the entire stock, tools, molds, and other items for \$25,000.

Since I was alone in my business, I did not think I could possibly manage so large an undertaking, and asked him to offer it to me again the following year when my son would be through with his studies and would be in a position to enter my firm. However, an Attleboro jeweler, who had never previously manufactured trophies, took advantage of the offer, and I lost out.

My business remained a one-man affair. I printed a small catalog, ran some advertisements in the newspapers, and engaged in some direct mail advertising. I sensed that the business could be expanded into something quite large if I only had the proper additional management assistance.

SON ENTERS BUSINESS

My son Sol had been a student at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. He did very well in his studies there and was incidentally able to support himself. He obtained a cigarette agency for the school, corrected student papers, and managed the school radio station. His obvious management abilities prompted his professors to prepare him for enrollment in the Wharton School of Business and Finance of the University of Pennsylvania, from which he obtained his Masters degree. Although busy with his studies and academic achievements, he managed to maintain his interest in Zionism and synagogue affairs. Shortly after graduation he married the former Esther Petersohn and then formally entered the business.

Beverly graduated cum laude from Classical High School. She followed in her brother's footsteps in Young Judea leadership and was eventually elected to national office. She graduated from Pembroke College in Brown University.

STARTS RETAIL OUTLET

My location in the heart of the jewelry manufacturing area had been perfect until now. But as I saw no future solely in manufacturing now that conditions had changed, I resolved also to enter the retail trade. I realized, however, that in order to sell as well as manufacture, I must locate in a spot more convenient for shoppers.

In 1954 I therefore rented a store on Pine Street in Providence, at that time a very busy thoroughfare. I decorated a couple of windows with displays of my stock. I even obtained permission, through the kindness of the late William White of the Hospital Trust Bank, to have a display case in the lobby of the bank building, and then also in the main branch of the Old Stone Bank.

The landlord of the building where I had my business, the late Henry Hassenfeld, was also very kind to me. Since the rest of the building was unoccupied, he allowed me to use this area in addition to the space I was renting without any additional charge. Even this was not easy for me to manage since the rental on the Pine Street premises was double that of my old quarters on Eddy Street.

On August 14, 1954 Providence experienced an event it would long remember, and I certainly shall for many, many years. The second hurricane of the twentieth century came to our city that day, and the entire downtown section was flooded, almost as extensively as in the hurricane of 1938. Both my son Sol and I were on the premises when the "big blow" struck and the water started gushing in. We realized that our business records, which were in the store, which faced Pine Street, would be ruined by the water if they were not immediately put at a higher level.

HURRICANE OF 1954

However, we were not in the store itself at the time and in order to reach them we must somehow find our way around the building to the front door. The connecting door between the shop and the store was always kept locked for security reasons. I can still see the picture of Sol swimming in the street in order to reach the front door to unlock it, pick up the records, and put them on a higher shelf to keep them out of the water. All around us people were paddling in boats as if we had suddenly been transported to the midst of a river. Warren Walden of radio station WJAR and other radio announcers and reporters of the local newspapers cruised by in a boat in order to obtain firsthand

views of the catastrophe. The manhole covers in the streets had been blown out, and the Providence River was gushing all through the streets.

The Internal Revenue Service was at the time located in a building on Dyer Street near the river, presently the offices of the Social Security Administration, and I recall as in a nightmare seeing many drawers and folders floating around on the water.

I remained on one side of the building, not knowing whether Sol had made it to the other side, the front of the store. The fifteen minutes or so until I heard Sol's voice from the store still seem an eternity to me!

In 1956 we had the great pleasure of seeing Beverly married to Andrew Blazar, the son of Evelyn and Milton Blazar. Soon after Beverly and Andy were married they left Rhode Island so that Andy could pursue his medical studies, first in Boston and then in Philadelphia, where their first child, Judith, was born. They returned to Rhode Island in the early 1960s.

BUSINESS EXPANDS

Sol's joining me was the "shot in the arm" that Emblem & Badge needed. His ideas were fresh and ambitious, and our ventures proved successful. Our first step was to get loans for expansion, and here my good credit record stood me in good stead. My bank extended loans of sizeable amounts, and this was a flow of fresh blood to the business.

In 1961 we were suddenly confronted with an important decision: the building on Eddy Street was put up for sale by its owner, and we were given first choice. However, the price demanded was beyond our means, especially the down payment of \$40,000, and again we found ourselves in search of a new home for our Emblem & Badge. At that moment of crisis, having to leave the premises on Eddy Street where we were running a well-established business, both retail and manufacturing, there seemed to be no place available for us. Then almost as if by a miracle, we were offered a golden opportunity of purchasing a large building on North Main Street in Providence on very favorable terms. It seemed almost God-sent to us. Naturally we seized the chance, and it is still home to Emblem & Badge.

Several years later Sol made a proposal to take over the running of the firm by himself. I decided to give him that opportunity. Both Beverly and Andrew had assured me that they had no interest in the business, and both agreed that Sol's work in and devotion to the busi-

ness of many years merited reward. This assurance enabled me to proceed to turning the business over to Sol. I remained an officer of the corporation, but only as a consultant.

In 1958 Fannie and I had the pleasure of realizing an old dream—we went on our first pilgrimage to Israel and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. On the return trip we visited several countries of Europe, and I still have the movies I made to prove it. We made a second trip in 1962, equally as enjoyable.

In 1964, wanting to be near the children, both of whom were living on the East Side of Providence, we sold our home on Moore Street and rented an apartment in Pawtucket, almost within walking distance of them.

Then in 1967 I lived through the greatest tragedy of my life. My dear Fannie, who had been ailing for quite some time, passed away. When I was left alone I stayed on at my apartment on Unity Street in Pawtucket for a short time. Eventually I moved in with Sol and Esther.

VISIT TO ISRAEL

In an attempt to forget a bit, I made another trip to Israel in the fall of 1967, and found much comfort in seeing the results of the Six-Day War, especially the fact that Jerusalem was now united and once again the whole city was the capital of Israel.

Every winter since then I have spent some time in Miami Beach and renewed acquaintance with old Zionist and Hebrew-speaking friends. My next visit to Israel, the fourth, came early in 1970. I had learned that a very dear and devoted friend of my family, Morris W. Shoham, had died. Morris Shoham had been both Sol's and Beverly's Hebrew teacher. But this was not all. Both Morris and his wife, Jeannette, had been as close to Fannie and me as people who were not blood relatives could possibly be. The four of us had spent almost all free time together. They were frequent guests in our home at holiday time, and our children were as attached to them as if they indeed had been their uncle and aunt. In 1958 they "made *aliyah*"* (moved to Israel) and

**Aliyah* means "ascent" or "going up." (Hebrew) In this context it means ascent to the Land of Israel for permanent settlement. Probably related to the comparative geographical elevation of Israel (e.g. in relation to Egypt), it was extended to apply to journeys from any country to Israel, whether in pilgrimage or for permanent settlement.

had lived there ever since. I learned that my friend Morris had died. During this visit I naturally paid a condolence call on Jeannette, and together we recalled the old days when we both had led such happy lives with our respective mates, both of whom had now left us.

The following summer Jeannette came to visit her sisters in Providence, and we saw each other frequently. I made my fifth trip to Israel in the fall of 1971, again saw Jeannette, and at that time we came to the conclusion that we should spend the rest of our lives together. I wrote to my children informing them of our joint decision, and received their prompt and warm agreement.

Jeannette, who had to make arrangements for leasing her house, stayed on until February 2, when she arrived in Providence. We were married ten days later at Mishkon Tfiloh Synagogue. Jeannette, an old time Hadassah and Zionist worker, who had also done much lecturing and writing, soon found her niche in Rhode Island. She continues these activities, both in the literary field and in Zionist and other organizational areas. We rented an apartment not far from my previous one, and we are still the Resnik family in Rhode Island, together with our children and grandchildren.

EPILOGUE

I have reread the above, the account of the events of my life, and as the memories crowd in on me, and I relive them all, one enormous fact imprints itself on my mind. At every turning point, whenever I was faced with a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, even when death literally stared me in the face, somehow, from somewhere, had come succor and help at the right moment. It seems as if a rescuing angel always stood ready to help, to save, and to point the way.

THE JEWISH WOMAN LIBERATED

A HISTORY OF THE LADIES' HEBREW FREE LOAN ASSOCIATION

by ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

The need for an organization in Rhode Island to provide women with a dignified loan service was first broached among a group of women meeting at the home of the late Mrs. Israel Sydney on Jefferson Street in Providence. From this discussion the idea of a women's loan association was germinated. The decision to set up such an organization was made later at the home of the late Mrs. P. Shatkin, the association's first president. Thus the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association came into being.

A woman's dilemma—worries about her relatives in Europe, for whom a few dollars for Passover would mean so much. Her daughter in the meantime needs a new coat for school. How can she afford both? With her husband in charge of the family's finances, she has no way of supplementing her "table" money. Her husband on the other hand has a source from which he can borrow, the Gemilath Chesed or the Hebrew Free Loan Association, as the name has been rendered in English. When the Providence organization was first formed in 1903 a man could borrow up to \$25. As the capital of the Association grew, the upper limit for loans was increased.

In a paper concerning the organization, its activities were described in this way: "These loans are made without interest or any other charge whatsoever, on easy repayments, thus enabling those in financial distress to go into or stay in business, marry, continue their studies, bury their dead, celebrate the high holiday, in short, to live as self-respecting members of the community."¹

There was no such opportunity over the years for the woman who was faced with similar financial problems. There were women, however, who were aware of the need for their own sex to have the same opportunity for borrowing as did the men. They realized that it was also important that a woman be enabled to borrow on her own, without endorsement from her husband, in whose name any possessions or property would likely be held.

In pursuit of this goal a group of concerned women met on June 15, 1931 for the purpose of establishing an organization to be called the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association. A loan fund would be made available from which women could borrow funds without interest and without



MRS. HARRY SHATKIN
Organizer and First President

their husbands' endorsements. Quietly and with the knowledge that the transaction would be kept in strict confidence, a woman could now obtain money to send to her poor relatives in Europe, or for buying a coat for her daughter. Her husband need not know. She could pay the loan back at a modest fifty cents or one dollar weekly. At the Association's inception she could borrow up to \$25 (this sum increased in later years), an amount which she might never have been able to accumulate on her own.

The concerned women who constituted the charter members of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association were: Mesdames A. Axelrod, J. Belilove, M. Bloom, M. Brown, E. Dlutzy, I. Feinberg, I. Feldman, L. Finer, M. Finklestein, S. Ganzer, B. Ginsberg, J. Gold, E. Hirsch, J. Horvitz, S. Hyman, D. Kahanovsky, S. Korn, H. Leach, S. Levin, M. Levine, B. Mayberg, S. Melamut, M. Mellion, G. Nelson, J. Ponce, E. Rosen, D. Saltzman, A. Samdperil, B. Seigel, H. Shatkin, L. Seitman, S. Sherman, G. Sydney, B. Tichman, S. Turcott, Z. Udisky, L. Winograd, S. Young, G. Zaidman, and J. Zitserman.

A copy of the loan application form is shown (on page 506).

Mary Sydney Ostrow (Mrs. Philip), who is the daughter of a charter member, Mrs. Israel Sydney, describes her home as a sort of "branch office" for those who sought to borrow. Mrs. Ostrow recalls that her mother attributed her knowledge of Jewish loan societies to her father, who had established a *gemilath chesed* in Europe.

A borrower was issued a book in which the loan was recorded. Loan payments were recorded in the book at the Sydney home. Located at 142 Jefferson Street, it was convenient for women of the North End of Providence either for making application for a loan or making the weekly payments. As documented in the old account books of the organization, Mrs. Sydney or her daughters brought the money which she collected to the Providence downtown office located in the Arcade Building. Mrs. Ostrow as a young girl was recruited to fill out the loan application forms for those who could not read or write English. Mrs. Sydney frequently acted as endorser. Very few borrowers failed to pay back their loans, perhaps one or two per cent. Her mother, or any of the other members who acted as endorsers, would make good on defaulted loans.

Another "branch office" for the convenience of those who lived in South Providence was located in the home of Mrs. David Baratz. She was a very active member and an officer of the organization throughout

its existence. Mrs. Baratz stated in an interview that among the accounts which she handled only one was not repaid. In that instance the woman had died. Her endorser refused to honor her commitment and consequently was never again asked to act as co-signer. Mrs. Baratz spoke of the enthusiasm and dedication of the women who served on the board. They held weekly meetings.

Listed in the account books of the organization are the names of the members who were responsible for collecting payments on loans and for turning the money in at the main office or "branches." A professional collector, Samuel Tatz, also according to Mrs. Ostrow did some collecting for the group.

THE EARLY YEARS 1931-1942

Esther Sydney Bloom (Mrs. Manuel), another daughter of Mrs. Israel Sydney, acted as treasurer of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association for the entire period of its existence. It is from her records that we have extracted the following information. The first check was issued on October 3, 1931 for the purchase of bookkeeping books at a cost of \$7.15. Subsequent checks for expenses to set up the loan society included payments to Liberty Printing for receipt books and advertisements. Now that they were in the business of loaning money, they had to advertize this service. One of the vehicles for publicity was the Ladies' Hebrew Union Aid Association, which had been chartered in 1890 "to give aid and charity to the poor."²

In the first month of its existence the Association paid \$3.00 to Zinn's restaurant for use of a meeting room. Expenses for setting up the organization were minimal.

From the forty members who organized the association and their modest dues and donations, the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association grew rapidly. After five years, according to an audited statement of condition on November 30, 1936, their assets were \$2,590.74. This sum was made up of loans receivable of \$1,490.65 and cash in banks of \$1,100.09. Their income for the year 1935-36 was derived from dues, \$501.65 (dues for members were \$1.00 per year); donations of \$24.86; luncheon, \$381.71 and \$9.80 from an accompanying raffle; sale of advertisements \$56.00; and an item called "cards", \$8.00. The total from all sources was \$982.02. Expenses were kept very low, amounting to only \$376.49, which included rent of \$120.00 for the year, stationery and printing of \$118.78, and office expenses of \$89.90. Sixty-seven women borrowed from the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association that year.

The total amount borrowed was \$1,464.50. The majority (57 women) borrowed the limit of \$25.00, but 3 women borrowed \$15.00 or \$10.00, and one only a dollar.

To celebrate their fifth anniversary the Association held a "Fifth Jubilee Loyalty Luncheon" at the Arcadia Hall on 109 Washington Street in Providence on March 18, 1937. The president at that time was Mrs. David Saltzman, who in her opening remarks said: "We may all admire, with pride, the wonderful strides that our organization has made in this short span of time. From a mere nucleus of an idea, it developed to embrace today a goodly portion of our Rhode Island Jewry. May I suggest that on this, our 5th anniversary, we represent a solid organization whose influence is felt for goodness and kindness in our Jewish community. It is a part of all of us, and I know that everyone who has come here this day had some part in lending a helping hand to this accomplishment. I thank you all for your kind co-operation and hope that we may all continue to strive for success, for our ideal, a *Gemilath Chesed*."

Chairman of the day, Mrs. Maurice Prager, added the following: "Our main aim, after all, is to make our organization not just another Jewish organization, but an outstanding institution for goodness and lending a real helping hand to those who need it in our Jewish community. I am confident that in the future, as in the past, you will all continue to lend your aid and support in this worthy cause".

The Seventh Annual Luncheon and Bridge was held at Zinn's Banquet Hall at 133 Mathewson Street, Providence, on March 22, 1939. Mrs. Joseph W. Strauss, President, greeted those present with these words: "By being present at this our Seventh Donors Luncheon you have been instrumental in furthering and helping to success a most worthy cause; a cause which has in its own way given to the Jewish people of this community the assurance of a brotherhood and sisterhood in their most trying times; a cause which stands ready to help those who are in need without humiliation or embarrassment; a cause which embodies one of the most sacred traditions of our Jewish heritage, *Gemileth Chesed*.

"The many hundreds of applicants that have been granted loans coupled with the increasing membership is ample proof of the worthiness of this noble work. For those who have already benefited and those who in the future will need its assistance, the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association will carry on with the motto, 'A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed'"

The chairmen of the program, Mrs. David Saltzman and Mrs. Benjamin Schuster, recognized the pressures on the Jewish community of Rhode Island to aid the troubled Jews in Nazi dominated countries: "None of us is unmindful of the fact that in these hard times, when the Jewish people are called upon to do so much to alleviate the suffering of our brethren overseas, it is quite an arduous task to call upon them further for local causes. At this time, however, we believe the Jewish community, as well as ourselves, have come to recognize the worthiness and great benefit of our work as a Jewish Ladies' Free Loan, for those in need in our own city.

"Even previously we were overawed with the willingness with which our workers took upon themselves their tasks, as well as their profound loyalty to the cause itself."

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

On March 31, 1941 the ladies celebrated their tenth anniversary with a luncheon in the Empire Room of the Crown Hotel on Weybosset Street in Providence. Mrs. Joseph W. Strauss, president, gave a history of the society relating its origins and its growth:

"Ten years ago a group of women gathered at the home of our honorary president (Mrs. Harry Shatkin) and conceived the idea that there was need in Rhode Island for an organization dedicated to the ideal of a gemilath chesed for women.

"Each member of this group contributed a sum of money to start a fund, and there was organized and consequently chartered the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association, whose main object is to loan small sums of money without payment of interest to women who are in need.

"Its early years were beset with many obstacles and oppositions, but this was soon overcome and by virtue of its character, that loans be made in strict confidence without embarrassment or humiliation, its necessity became apparent and it grew from a mere handful of women with a starting fund of about \$190 to the organization of today, with a membership of over 600 women and a loan fund covering the distribution of many hundreds of dollars.

"At this tenth milestone of our existence we have granted \$25.00 loans to over 1800 applicants."

The treasurer's annual report of 1942 showed assets which included \$1,110 in bonds, \$291.24 in a bank account, and \$1,000.75 in accounts

receivable. In that year loans totalling \$1,415.00 had been paid out. Expenses for rent, donations to other charitable institutions, luncheon, and printing totalled \$707.34. One item of interest was the payment of \$25.00 for purchase of a typewriter! They received \$238.25 in dues and donations, \$515.33 from the annual luncheon, and \$1,577.85 repaid from loans.

In its short history the organization was not free of crises. At the Seventh Annual Luncheon there was reference to the "suffering of our brethren overseas". At the Fourteenth Annual Luncheon held on January 24, 1945 in the Narragansett Hotel on Dorrance Street in Providence concern was expressed about World War II.

In her presidential remarks, Mrs. Isadore Feldman stated: "It's my hope that this terrible and heartbreaking war will soon come to a victorious end and that our organization will continue the fine work it has been doing in our community."

THEY SHARE THEIR MONEY

The monies which were collected from dues, donor events, and other sources accumulated in the treasury. The members zealously raised more money than was needed for loans. As a result of the excellent repayment of loans, there was little loss through default. Mrs. Bloom's records documented donations to other charitable groups by the Association. These included the Jewish community servicemen's affairs, the United War Fund, the cancer drive, the Ladies' Hebrew Union Aid, the League of Jewish Women, the Community Chest, the Pioneer Women, the United Jewish Appeal, the General Jewish Committee, and Red Cross, among others.

As the general economy improved (and one can speculate about better access for women to the family financial resources), the loans became fewer and more of the treasury money went to other charitable organizations. In the Association's accounts of 1948, for example, a \$100 contribution to the Brandeis University Library was noted.

On October 11, 1953 a ceremony took place at which the Association presented a check for \$5,000 to the Building Fund of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. This is recorded in a news item in the *Rhode Island Jewish Herald* of October 23, 1953, illustrated by a photograph with the caption: "Hebrew Free Loan Association gives \$5,000 to Home for Aged: Mrs. David Baratz, president of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association presents a check for \$5,000 to Jacob I. Felder,



Mrs. Manuel S. Bloom, Treasurer of the Jewish Home for the Aged, receiving check from Mrs. David Baratz, President of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association.

president of the Jewish Home for the Aged. The money is earmarked for the Home's Building Fund." Watching the presentation ceremony were: Mrs. Manuel S. Bloom, treasurer of the Association; Jacob Licht, board member of the Home; Mrs. Jacob Licht and Mrs. David Saltzman, honorary vice-presidents of the Association; Mrs. Harry Shatkin, honorary president; Max Winograd, vice-president of the Home; Irving I. Fain, board member and co-chairman of the building committee; and Mrs. Joseph W. Strauss, honorary vice-president and chairman of the women's donation committee. (See illustration on page 510).

THE LADIES' HEBREW FREE LOAN ASSOCIATION IS DISBANDED

The treasurer's records indicated that there was little activity in the organization after the \$5,000 grant to the Home for Aged. On February 15, 1965 a memorandum listed the following assets: "Typewriter; cabinet with Mrs. Proger; cabinet with Mrs. Bloom." Another note listed Loans Receivable as inactive since April 1958. The office furniture had been given to a Mr. Snow.

On June 20, 1965 the final meeting of the organization was held, and minutes of that meeting were recorded as follows:

"A meeting of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association was called to order by the president, Mrs. Hannah Baratz, at her home, 29 Laura Street. The following facts were noted:

"The organization has ceased to function because the need for which it was originally formed no longer exists.

"The office in the Lederer Building was closed in June 1958.

"The few outstanding accounts receivable could not be collected.

"A motion made by Mrs. Bessie Shatkin and seconded by Mrs. Rose Licht, honorary president and honorary first vice president, to close the books and give the balance in the treasury to a worthy cause was carried.

"A motion was also carried not to renew the charter.

"Those in attendance at the meeting were: Hannah Baratz, President; Rose Bilsky, Vice President; Bella Tichman, Charter Member; Ruth Jurmann, Recording Secretary; Pia Lipit (Rubin), Mrs. Philip Ostrow, Member at Large; and Esther Bloom."

The minutes were signed by E. L. Bloom, Secretary pro tem.

As for the disposition of the funds to a "worthy cause," a memorandum dated July 20, 1967 read:

"The treasurer and president were authorized to donate \$1,000 to the G.J.C. (General Jewish Committee) Emergency Fund. This cancelled \$345.44 in the savings account at Industrial Trust Company and \$654.56 from the account at Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company.

"With a balance on hand of \$230.92 and a few small outstanding bills, Mrs. Shatkin and Mrs. Licht recommended that the remaining \$200.00 balance be given to the Jewish Home for the Aged. This was approved by the following: Mrs. Shatkin, Mrs. Licht, Mrs. D. Baratz, president; Mrs. R. Bilsky, vice president; Mrs. B. Tichman, charter member; Mrs. P. Ostrow, member at large; Mrs. E. Bloom, and secretary, Ruth Jurmann."

The active life of the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association was no more than twenty years, but in that short period it provided many women with a resource from which they could borrow for any purpose whatever with no more collateral than their own signatures. Organizations such as the Ladies Union Aid had always been available to charity in the Jewish tradition of anonymity, but it still was charity in the recipient's eyes. The Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association provided them with a vehicle for assistance which permitted them to maintain their self-reliance without, in their minds, the stigma of "handouts" or charity. Thus, along with such privileges as the right to vote, the privilege among the Jewish women of Providence to borrow on their own recognizance was an early step toward the goal of the liberated woman of today.

REFERENCES

1. Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes 1:129, Dec. 1954.
2. Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes 2:24, June 1956.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the gracious assistance of Mrs. Philip Ostrow, for interviews on March 31, August 14, and October 1, 1978.
Interview with Mrs. David Baratz on September 25, 1978.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NETWORKS AMONG
RHODE ISLAND JEWS: A STUDY BASED ON
ORAL HISTORIES

By SONYA MICHEL

One of the richest sources for the study of Rhode Island Jews lies in the recollections of older members of the community. Many of them came as immigrants to this country about the turn of the century. They established themselves in the ensuing years and have contributed to social, cultural, and economic development both inside and outside the Jewish community for decades. Most of them have kept no systematic records of their activities, nor have they compiled autobiographies. Thus oral history becomes an important method for documenting their lives and at the same time increasing our understanding of the complexity of American Jewish social history.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1978 I began an oral history project at the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island on Hillside Avenue in Providence. I interviewed seven residents, four women and three men. Although they were chosen more or less at random, and although there are many differences among their lives, there is also a good deal of commonality, which I shall describe in this paper.

First, I should like to introduce my "subjects" in alphabetical order. None of them was actually born in Rhode Island, so it is interesting to trace the twists and turns of their individual lives which brought them here. Max Alexander was born in a small town in Germany in 1891. He fought in World War I, and then emigrated to America in 1923 when the dangers of Nazism became obvious in his home town. Mr. Alexander first went to Detroit, and then to Chicago. After a series of restaurant jobs, he worked in an orphanage and then in an old people's home in Chicago. He married in 1928, and his wife, Nadia, was active in many of the institutions which Mr. Alexander served. In 1940 the Alexanders came to Providence, where Mr. Alexander served as superintendent of the Jewish Home for the Aged until his retirement in 1963. After retirement he "loafed" and pursued painting. One of his early canvases, now hanging in the newly-renovated "old" wing of the Home, pictures that building when it was under construction in 1956.

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Bertha Brill was born in Austria in the 1890s (she is unsure of the date) and came to the United States as a small child. Her family lived in Brownsville, Brooklyn, for a while and then joined relatives living in Providence. As a young woman Mrs. Brill worked as a salesgirl at the Outlet Company department store and then as a chocolate dipper at Gibson's Candy Factory in Providence. She married in the 1920s and promptly had her first child. She returned to work in the candy factory during the Depression. Mrs. Brill remained close to her parents. She felt that it was important for her to care for them when they became aged. She and her sister went weekly to clean and shop for them, even though she had her own family responsibilities and many personal medical problems as well.

Caring for her parents also had an important value for Anna Frucht. She was born near Odessa in Russia in 1902, and came to Rhode Island at the age of three. Her father became a peddler in Central Falls and eventually opened a dry goods store in Pawtucket. Anna became a "mill rat," as she puts it, working as a bookkeeper at several of the textile mills in the Blackstone Valley. In 1949 the firm for which she was then working moved South. Anna was asked to go along, but she was unwilling to leave her parents. So she remained here. She became the bookkeeper at the Jewish Home for the Aged several years after Max Alexander took over as superintendent. Anna not only was in charge of the books, but also became an unofficial social worker (a function she continues to perform now as a resident of the Home.) She lived at home with her parents and cared for them until they both died in their eighties.

Jack Lapin arrived in this country as a young man of twenty after a trip from Byelorussia that lasted two years. In order to avoid conscription by the Bolshevik army in 1917, he was smuggled across the Russian border into Poland. He waited in Warsaw, first for a passport, and then for other members of his family who decided to join him. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was instrumental in channeling funds sent to Jack from members of his family who had already arrived in this country. They also helped untangle a good deal of red tape. Although Jack describes his bachelor days in Warsaw as a time for adventure and experimentation, once he married he upheld traditional commitments to family and religion, which have remained significant throughout his life.

Celia Parvey was exposed to both secular and Jewish influences, which she combined in a lifelong absorption with music of all kinds. Born

on the lower East Side of New York in 1892, Mrs. Parvey was trained in piano and singing from the time she was a child. She began early to share her talents and skills with others: as a high school student she taught music to children at the Educational Alliance, a settlement house in Manhattan. She began studying to become a kindergarten teacher at Normal College (now Hunter College), but left the program in 1913 to marry Doctor Harry Parvey, a dentist from Providence. She soon returned to her music, continuing her own training in singing, organizing a children's choir at Temple Beth-El and performing as a soloist at other Jewish temples around Providence. She was active in musical organizations such as the Chopin Club, the Rhode Island Federation of Music Clubs, and the Providence Community Concert Association. Jewish community services also claimed her time; she volunteered for the Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, The Miriam Hospital, and the Jewish Home for the Aged. Upon her husband's death in 1943 Mrs. Parvey had to give up much of her community activity and go to work as a supply clerk at the Quonset Point naval base. She held that job for 20 years, pursuing her other interests in the evenings and on weekends. She currently continues her community service as record secretary for the Residents' Council at the Home.

Minnie Rosenfield also came to Rhode Island as a bride. Born into a large family in Hartford, Connecticut in 1882, she left high school at midpoint to work as a salesgirl in G. Fox and Company, a prominent department store in the area. Eventually she became head of her department there. Minnie's brothers and sisters also continued to live at home after they went to work, contributing their wages to the family coffers. At the center of this lively household was Minnie's mother, who watched carefully over a number of real estate holdings while caring for her family. Minnie met her husband, Marcus Rosenfield, while visiting relatives in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. When she first came to live in that largely French-speaking community, she found herself as much at a loss as any "greenhorn." "It was anything but a Shangri-la to me," she recalls. "You went into a department store, they wouldn't say good morning or goodbye. If you didn't talk French, they wouldn't talk to you."* Minnie had two children and added to her family responsibilities a job at a children's clothing store in Woonsocket. She is now an avid reader and an enthusiastic fan of her farflung grandchildren.

Of the people I interviewed, Sam Saltzman is the most recent arrival in Providence, having pursued cultural and political activities for

*All quotations taken from taped interviews. See list at end of article.

many years in New York before coming here. He was born in a small town in Poland in 1893 and as a youth joined the Bund, an East European organization which attracted Jewish workers interested in the development of Yiddish culture and socialist politics. Self-taught except for his early religious education, Mr. Saltzman became a popular lecturer and teacher in Yiddish cultural circles in this country. Working in the needle trades in New York, he also participated in the progressive wing of the trade union movement. Mr. Saltzman removed to Providence to live near his son, who practices medicine here. He attends the daycare program at the Home.

WHY THEY CAME TO AMERICA

All of the persons I interviewed were either immigrants or the children of immigrants. There were two questions regarding each family's emigration: why they left, and why they came to a specific part of the United States. However clear the immigrants' intentions, events often intervened so that things did not work out as planned. Sam Saltzman's journey to America can serve as a case in point. He left Poland in 1911 seeking economic opportunity. Trained as a tailor, he and several friends set out for Australia: "Australia was a very young country at that time. . . . So we thought—good tailors—we go together to the country." In order to enter Australia, they were first required to establish residency in England, but Sam never made it. Bureaucratic tangles prevented him from making connections with his friends. So finally, contrary to his intentions, he reluctantly sailed to the United States instead.

Jack Lapin's reasons for leaving, as already noted, were quite different. He had no sooner passed his induction examination for the Bolshevik army than his mother came up with an escape plan. She told him to hide himself in the corn in the garden behind their house. The day before he was to go into service

My mother gave me a loaf of bread and a five-dollar gold piece. She say, "Son, go ahead." I say, "Where am I gonna go? I've never been away from home."

His mother had already arranged for him to travel with two other families to meet a man who would smuggle them over the border to Poland. His escape was successful, but he did not reach the United States until two years later.

Anna Frucht's father also left Russia to avoid conscription. His departure was complicated by the fact that he was already a family man,

and emigration meant a loss of economic stability. This was especially difficult for Anna's mother, who came from a well-to-do family and, according to Anna, "didn't even know how to boil water" when she arrived here. Mrs. Frucht had some household help, but made all of Anna's clothing herself. "Where she learned to do that is amazing," Anna recalls, "because she never did anything like that—she made all my clothes and washed the floors and did everything."

Max Alexander left for different political reasons: the rise of fascism in Germany in the early 1920s. His brother and sister had already arrived here, and his parents were willing to part with him, he recalls, "because they felt too that the brown horde of Nazis spelt nothing good. All those who joined the Nazi movement were usually . . . no good material for decent behavior—misfits and school failures. So, 1923, they were beginning to march in Germany." People in the Alexanders' town were divided: some joined the Brown Shirts, while others joined the opposition party, the Social Democrats. "They tried to protect us," Max said, "but. . . ." His parents remained behind.

WAITING ON THE PIER

The people I interviewed were a fortunate group, for nearly every one of them who arrived as an immigrant had a network of friends and relatives waiting. They were important in helping to secure housing, employment, and information to aid in adjustment to the new country. For example, Anna Frucht's father went to Central Falls, Rhode Island, because he had friends there. He brought over Anna and her mother, and then several nieces and nephews. Jack Lapin first lived with a married sister (who had already sent him funds while he was delayed in Warsaw) and worked in her husband's handbag business. He had trouble learning the trade and turned to upholstery. By living with his sister he was able to save enough money to establish his own business. Bertha Brill's father first came to Fall River, Massachusetts, where he had relatives who taught him the soda (soft drink) business. Max Alexander had a brother in the wholesale meat business, who secured Max's first job as a dishwasher in a roadhouse to which he made deliveries. Max's first job in social work also came through a family connection, a tenant in his sister's house.

These incidents suggest that family networks were closeknit and efficient. Relatives saw to it that newcomers were equipped to deal with circumstances in this country. The earlier arrivals shared skills, opportunities, and whatever resources were available. No one was left

to fend for himself or herself, or thrown on the mercy of anonymous agencies outside the Jewish community.

The experience of these immigrants indicates that family loyalties were paramount among their values, and that they would take care of their own, even at great sacrifice to themselves. Sam Saltzman described his early days living with a married sister on New York's lower East Side:

She was on the first floor, the toilet was in the hall, there were four tenants. Now each tenant, like my sister, had three children of her own, and she and her husband, and her husband's brother, and the boarder. It was a very small kitchen you came in, very small little bedroom for the boarder, and living room where everyone opened beds for sleeping. And every week another one of the four tenants took care to keep the toilet clean. Others had the toilet outside—downstairs. The water was on the second floor, or on the ground floor. You had to go down to bring up water. You didn't have water in the kitchen—there was no plumbing.

While living quarters were often cramped, they enabled immigrants to stretch their low wages and accumulate some savings. Living with relatives also provided immigrants with a sense of security and a source of familiar culture in the new world.

One of the most remarkable stories about family ties was related by Minnie Rosenfield. Minnie's mother had five children of her own, plus three of her husband's by a former wife. One day a young man came to the house in Hartford, Connecticut, claiming to be yet another son of Minnie's father, also by a former wife. I asked her, "You mean your father had *two* wives before your mother?" "If not more," Minnie replied. "He couldn't remember. She was afraid to open the door after that for fear it would be someone else walking in." Despite her qualms Minnie's mother took in the newcomer and made him welcome. She sent him to night school to learn pharmacy and set him up in business afterwards. As Minnie remembers,

My mother bent over backwards to see that he got attention. All the stepchildren, she favored them. She didn't want to be called a stepmother, and she wasn't. Sometimes we complained, because they got more attention, but they were nice, they were good. . . . She wanted the family to be together—family, family. . . .

Minnie's mother also found cousins, and brought them into the family circle as well.

KEEPING UP TIES

The people I interviewed were more likely to live with relatives while they were single, but even after they married many tried to live close by other family members. Multiple-family dwellings—the familiar New England “triple-decker three family house—often housed several generations of the same family. Bertha Brill lived on the second floor of a triple-decker when she married; her mother lived on the first floor, and her older brother on the third. This arrangement worked well until tensions arose between Mr. Brill and his brother-in-law. Bertha decided it was “time to move away,” but her decision made her mother so angry that she refused to talk to her until the flat had been rented again. Besides her immediate family, Bertha had an uncle who lived close by. Both families attended *shul** together, and, Bertha remembers, “We’d fill the whole row.”

Jack Lapin’s brother bought a triple-decker for their mother in South Providence. “My mother’s already a princess—she’s got a home,” he said with a smile. As long as Mrs. Lapin had unmarried children living at home, she rented out two of the three floors. When Jack married, he and his wife lived in the house for a while, then moved to Pawtucket, Rhode Island to live near his wife’s mother. Jack’s wife saw these arrangements as economy measures. The young couple lived with their families until they had saved enough to buy their own triple-decker.

Anna Frucht described the allocation of floors in the triple-decker which her father had bought together with several cousins. Anna’s family lived on the first floor, because they had four children; one cousin lived on the second floor, because they had two children; and a second cousin lived on the top floor, because they had no children.

Relatives provided help and advice, particularly at moments of family crisis. When Minnie Rosenfield had her first baby, a son, her mother came from Hartford, Connecticut to be with her and take care of her house. When her second child was born, her mother took her son to stay with her in Hartford until Minnie had recovered. When the baby was home a month, her mother brought her son Paul back. Minnie recalls Paul’s reaction to his baby sister:

“I’ve got a little sister for you.”

“She’s awful little.”

“But you’re gonna love her, aren’t you?”

“But she’s little.”

*Synagogue, (Yiddish)

I kept apologizing, why she was little. She was such a tiny baby. . . .

Parents of that generation took it for granted that they would help their children as much as they were able, and children automatically assumed that they would reciprocate when their parents needed help. Bertha Brill's parents did not want to live with her when they became old. So they kept their own place, and Bertha and her sister came to do their housework and shopping every week. This became a source of tension between Bertha and her husband, which her sister-in-law exacerbated: "She comes here and does all her mother's work, and you have to pay all the doctor bills," the sister-in-law told Mr. Brill. When confronted with this complaint, Mrs. Brill replied, "I was taught to respect my parents, and I'll do that as long as I live." Celia Parvey also wanted her father to live with her after her mother died, but he refused because he "didn't think it was right." He chose to remain with friends of his own generation and maintain his independence.

To Anna Frucht, caring for her parents was a matter of supreme principle. She never married, for she felt that, even if she lived upstairs from her parents, "I couldn't have been as good a daughter. When you're married and have children, you cannot, as much as you want to, . . . devote your life to your mother and father. I had no difficulty—they were part of me." When Anna was working at the Home, Max Alexander, then superintendent, urged her, "Anna, it's just too much, working all day and going home—being with them—at night. . . ." But, Anna recalls,

I never resented one moment of it. . . . It was good to know that I was with them, and I was just part of their lives. My mother used to worry about my not getting married. I don't consider that at all a tragedy. I would have liked to have had a husband and children, but—that's how my life went, and I didn't regret a bit of it. In fact, my dearest friend said, when my mother died, "Now you can start to live again." I could have killed her at that time. I said, "That is not true." Having taken care of them, you learn to love them more. And when they both died, I just felt—there was nothing. I had no one to take care of—I just had to worry about myself, which I had been doing anyway. I really felt so bereft. . . . However, I'm not sorry for any of that.

WORK, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

The values surrounding Jewish families were closely intertwined with the work life of the people I interviewed. Some expressed their

desire to help others through social work, both paid and volunteer; others took extra jobs or worked in addition to shouldering household responsibilities in order to make life more comfortable for their families.

Although American mythology has it that women stay home while men work, my interviews revealed that women of the immigrant generation not only worked before marriage, but afterwards as well, often returning to the same kinds of jobs. Minnie Rosenfield, for example, drew on her experience as a salesgirl and then department head at Fox's when she went to work at the Roberts Children's Shop in Pawtucket. However, her motivation for working had changed somewhat. She worked before marriage because "I liked the work. I liked the money. I liked to have what I wanted. Selfish, you know." And after her children were born she worked because her daughter had begun to complain about her clothes, and while she was in the children's shop she could pick up nice dresses and put them away for her daughter. "She always looked beautiful," Minnie recalled proudly. Minnie seemed to have little trouble managing her home and job simultaneously. Her husband never complained because Minnie saw to it that

he had everything that he needed, and everything went on just the same. And I wouldn't go in too early. I'd have time enough before I left. I'd go in maybe about 11 o'clock and stay until 4 or 5. . . .

Bertha Brill's husband objected to her working, and she did so only when the Depression made it a financial necessity. She had worked in the candy factory for five years before her marriage. She loved the work and, "naturally," ate a lot of candy. Both men and women worked at Gibson's: the men made the candy, and the women dipped it. The men earned more money, but, according to Bertha, "in those days, it didn't bother me at all." There was no union in the factory. Most of Bertha's fellow workers were Italian, but everyone socialized and shared their skills. Bertha learned to dip from the other workers. When she returned to work, her children were still small, and she paid a neighbor to take care of them. One day she came home from work in bitter cold weather to find the children out on the street. She felt that she could no longer entrust them to her neighbor; so she quit and stayed home with them.

The phenomenon of married women working was really nothing new in Jewish culture. As Jack Lapin recalls, in the old country, "the women all worked. The women were the breadwinners. And the men, never. . . ." The women didn't resent this role because, according to Jack, "the man was the god. He was the boss—for the wife and for the

kids. She used to work like a horse, and he was the boss.” In immigrant communities both men and women worked, and women were more likely to be recognized for helping to ensure that the family gained an economic foothold and were perhaps able to provide a boost for their children. Jack’s wife took only a short time off work for the births of each of their three children, then left them in the charge of a Scottish woman who came in each day. At first, Mrs. Lapin worked so they could save enough to buy a house. But even after they had bought one, she continued working. Jack urged her to quit: “That’s enough.” But she replied, “No, that’s not enough. The kids growing up, we gotta have vacation—we haven’t had any—and money for the kids.”

Celia Parvey also went to work to help put her children through college after her husband’s death, but, in a sense, her 20 years as a supply clerk for the Navy was a second career. Previously, she had been a full-time volunteer, her husband’s dental profession enabling her to donate her services to many community organizations. Most of her work was related to music. One of her first experiences was with the children at the Educational Alliance settlement house in New York. Her cousin, a social worker there, arranged for her to work with some of the children who came in. “I’d get them in a group and play piano and tell them what it was, and then some of them wanted to learn how to play the piano.” After moving to Providence Mrs. Parvey was asked to start a children’s choir at Temple Beth-El, and she taught music to residents of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, then located on North Main Street in Providence. Mrs. Parvey also raised money for the Jewish Home for the Aged in the traditional way: “I used to go around with a little box—a *pushke**—and I used to go up the steps, three and four flights, and collect quarters and fifty-cent pieces.

Anne Frucht was able to combine her social concern with her job when she came to the Jewish Home for the Aged. When she first went to work, there were about 50 residents. She describes the Home as it was then:

I felt so bad, it was such a dingy place. . . . See, I was doing social work even then, because if one of [the residents] came down and said, “Anna, call up my son. I haven’t heard from him today”; “Write a postcard to my daughter” . . . and so forth, I did it. I didn’t even give it a thought. I was reprimanded for it by my boss. He said, “Anna, you don’t do that. (We didn’t have a social worker in those days.) I said, “Why? All I do is write a card or

*A small metal collection box. (Yiddish)

make a telephone call." He said, "That's not your job." I said, "Well, there's no social worker here. How would you like it if you had a mother or father somewhere and someone couldn't sit and write a card for you? . . . Is my work satisfactory? Am I behind in my work?" He said, "No," so I said, "Then what do you care whether I do it? When my work is behind, I take it home to do it," which I did.

Anna's boss in those days, Max Alexander, had had professional training and experience, and, although he had altercations with Anna, he also had a record of making innovations in the institutions where he worked. When he went to the *Auldersine*, a German-Jewish home for the aged in Chicago, he tried to bring a "better Jewish spirit in there." Mr. Alexander said that his wife, Natalie, "deserves a lot of credit for bringing the spirit and congeniality to the Home. [The residents] were isolated in the Home when we came there. They didn't even have a telephone for the residents." (The former supervisor had not allowed one because she was afraid the residents would call friends and relatives to complain about the food.) But Mr. Alexander's philosophy was

to individualize them, become a person, not just a number in the books. . . . I didn't mind whether they complained about the food or not, because we knew it was good.

Previously, while working in an orphanage in Chicago, Mr. Alexander had tried to reform the authoritarian discipline he found there. For instance, he had his own way of putting the children to bed:

Now, I put it in the way of a game: "If you're done in three minutes or five minutes, you can have a story." So they went quietly, got undressed, got ready for the story hour. And they were very attentive to the stories . . . fairy tales, tales from their own Jewish background, King David and King Solomon.

Mr. Alexander did his own translations from German, and told the stories from memory.

He also did graduate work at the University of Chicago in family welfare and other subjects. At that time foster home care was being advocated as a replacement for the institutionalization of orphans. Mr. Alexander's opinion was, "It was a good plan to keep them in the family as long as possible. I was only worried that you couldn't find enough boarding homes for those children. It was a question of getting enough suitable parents." The philosophy of the Jewish orphanage where he worked was slightly different: "It connected with the family, tried to

reach out and put the boys and girls back into the family circle." Mr. Alexander himself was

leaning more towards the family. . . . It also meant it would reduce our jobs. Still, we were working for the children's sake, to have them come through as a full citizen from the family, rather than from an institution. And there were some problems there. The children all couldn't find placement; especially when they were 16 or 17, it was difficult to be placed in a home. At a younger age, you could possibly break them in (more readily).

At the Jewish Home for the Aged in Providence Mr. Alexander fought for "higher standards and also for higher budgets—they went hand in hand. . . . The idea which I brought with me was to broaden the base of the Home and establish a membership to give it a solid foundation . . . so it would be a more regular income. . . . We succeeded in raising the funds to \$300,000." The Home had 44 residents when he came in 1940, and 172 by the time he retired.

Mr. Alexander recalls that in both the *Auldersine* in Chicago and the Jewish Home in Providence the ladies' associations of volunteers often served as liaison between residents and the administration. "They visited often, and they brought back wishes to the board, and the board, in turn, could approach me to remedy the situation. . . . We didn't resent complaints because we were there to help them." Some of the volunteers had had social work training in college, and Mr. Alexander felt that all of them helped maintain the morale of the residents, in addition to making significant financial contributions to the Home.

At that time the superintendent had his own residence on the grounds of the Home, and, not surprisingly, Mr. Alexander's whole family became involved in the institution. His two daughters often went up to the "big house" to talk to the residents.

. . . The younger one had a special friend, called her "Grandmother," . . . a woman who gave her a quarter each birthday. She accumulated about 13 birthdays from that woman. She took a good liking to that little girl.

Mrs. Alexander was also extremely active in the Home. Anna Frucht recalls that the Alexanders had worked out a division of labor;

He took care of the office, the administration; she took care of every part of the kitchen, the laundry . . . the nursing department—she was the head of everything, although we had a head nurse.

She was paid a small salary, "not . . . enough to distinguish her from the other employees." Her motives for working had less to do with money than values; according to Mr. Alexander, "She spent so much time in the 'big house' . . . in order that we might have higher standards." Mrs. Alexander supervised painting and renovation, bringing the Home "up to date." Although the Alexanders' daughters also participated in the daily life of the Home, they sometimes resented the fact that their mother had little time to spend with them. But she tried to make them understand that her work made life better for the residents; so they finally agreed that she had to work "once in a while."

CARRYING ON THE CULTURE

For Sam Saltzman community work took the form of preserving and spreading Yiddish culture. Yiddish literature was beginning to burgeon when Mr. Saltzman was a youth in Europe, and through Bund meetings in his home town he was exposed to politics and literature written, for the first time, in the "Jewish language." According to Mr. Saltzman, the Bund taught "why and what it means—all about revolution. And they brought in a new enlightenment in the mind of the Jewish people, why we have to always fight for justice and freedom for all people."

In New York Mr. Saltzman became active in Yiddish cultural groups. He belonged to one called, in English, the "Beggars," or "Beggars' Organization," which invited lecturers and speakers to their large meetings every Sunday. Sometimes the topic was political, sometimes literary. Poets and novelists came to read their work "a little bit to help us out and also to hear our discussion about it. It's not that they were just reading. They were reading, and they wanted us to discuss it and see, to improve it or not." Later, Mr. Saltzman himself became a popular speaker on cultural and religious topics, going around to some 35 or 40 cultural clubs in Manhattan and Brooklyn which had established a network. As Sam remembered,

I didn't want to go to speak for money, I wanted to go to your club, give you a lecture, but you have good singers, you send them also to us, for nothing. Or, if I want from you to pay me for the carfare, if I took a taxi—you pay for the carfare. But it shouldn't be a business transaction—a cultural transaction.

After he married, work and family life curtailed his activity, but he continued to do as much as he could. Working in the needle trades, he was also active in union matters. Of the balance between paid work and scholarship, Sam said,

I do it [speaking and writing] because I enjoy it. I didn't want to do it for money. I made up my mind, if the Jewish prophets, 90 per cent of them could work for their money or their livelihood, could I also work for my livelihood. And I didn't want to make a business out of it. I don't know so much.

What is notable about the community work of people such as Sam Saltzman, Anna Frucht, Celia Parvey, and the others I interviewed is that they combined traditional values, concerns, and culture with "modern" or American forms. Even American education did not eradicate the traces of a Jewish background: those who attended colleges and universities brought new methods and information back into the community. Celia Parvey and Max Alexander, for instance, were both trained in American schools. Mrs. Parvey attended what is now Hunter College in New York, learning the Montessori method of early childhood education. Later, she felt that this training helped her in teaching music to children and directing the Temple choir. At the University of Chicago in the '20s, Max Alexander studied with some of the leading welfare experts of his day, including the director of the Child Welfare League of America. He worked briefly with the public welfare department in Chicago, but spent most of his career serving Jewish agencies and institutions, applying what he had learned to bring about the kinds of improvements noted earlier.

OLD VALUES . . . AND NEW

In their personal lives, these people also combined old and new values. Although none of them had the formally arranged marriages common among Jews in Eastern Europe, most of them met their future spouses through family or friends. The women I interviewed were generally kept under closer surveillance than the men and felt more susceptible to parental influence. There was a double standard at work here. Young people of both sexes were ultimately controlled by the community, since young men who wanted to date Jewish women had to run the gauntlet of their families first.

Minnie Rosenfield's courtship illustrates how this occurred. When she went to visit her relatives in Rhode Island, they told her, "We've got a man for you." The match was so successful that Minnie "got a little excited," and she and Marcus Rosenfield went off to a judge and got married immediately. "I went home the next night and my mother gave 'what-for' because she had planned a nice garden wedding," Minnie remembers. Her mother said, "'You're married, but you're not married. I didn't see you.' And she had a beautiful wedding for me."

Bertha Brill's future husband came from New York to Providence to attend a party for a niece who was engaged to one of Bertha's brothers. Her mother urged her to marry Harry Brill, even though they had not known each other very long. Bertha accepted her mother's authority. Anna Frucht's mother also attempted to influence her daughter's social choices, and Anna, too, was somewhat responsive—but she also had a mind of her own when it came to certain issues. "I wouldn't think of going out with a gentile fellow—I wouldn't do that to my folks. . . . But *caste* meant nothing to me. You know how they say in Jewish, 'a *shuster*, a *shneider*'—that always irritated me."*

These values once brought her into serious conflict with her mother. Anna had gone to an *Arbeiter Ring*** concert with the son of a weaver and a group of other young people. Her parents also attended the concert. When Anna came home, she found her mother waiting up for her. Mrs. Frucht confronted Anna:

"You disgraced me, you absolutely disgraced me. Papa and I felt terrible. . . . How do you dare go out with this fellow?" I said, "Mama, we came in a group, he's a very nice fellow. I like him. . . . She said, "But his father's a weaver." I said, "So what?" She looked at me, she said, "Don't you realize you're above that sort of thing?" I said, "No!" I was so utterly, utterly stunned.

Anna's father attempted to be conciliatory, although he really took his daughter's side in such matters. He told her: "Look, Anna, you and I think one way, and Mama unfortunately thinks another way. But don't argue with Mama, don't make her unhappy." Anna replied, "Well Papa, I can't help it. I'll go out with anyone I want to, unless he's known to be bad or something."

Although some of the men I interviewed met their future wives in public settings, the accounts of their courtships revealed that these young women were closely supervised by their families. Sam Saltzman, for example, met his wife at the opera. She had obtained her ticket from a friend of Sam's who couldn't attend, and sat a few seats away from him. During the first act she annoyed one of the other men in the group by asking him questions about the plot. At intermission, Sam changed seats, and took over the explanations:

"It's so this—and this—up 'til now; the second act, you'll see this and this." So she wouldn't have to ask me. "But, if something is

*"shoemaker, a tailor"—a Jewish saying denigrating these trades. (Yiddish)

**Workmen's Circle. (Yiddish)

still not clear, I want you to ask me.” I don’t want her to be mixed up. . . . And that’s it. When we finished, goodbye, she didn’t ask me anything, I didn’t ask her anything. But I know who she was—I knew she was from the family with six girls. I never cared to go up to the house—six girls! And that’s all.

But the next day, Sam ran into her walking in Central Park with one of her sisters, who indicated that he had met with the family’s approval. “She told me all about you—fine man,” the sister said, “and I would like you to be invited to our house, come up to us.” Sam replied, “All right, I’ll come up some time. But I want to take your sister next Friday to the opera.” Sam had already bought tickets. Fortunately, the sister gave her permission.

Jack Lapin ran into more opposition from the family of his bride-to-be, but he also behaved more boldly. When he first spotted her in Roger Williams Park, it was a case of love at first sight. He told his pals, “‘That’s gonna be my wife.’” He went up to her and introduced himself. She told him her name was Chaya Goldstein, and invited him to a party that night at her home in Pawtucket. True love was nearly foiled at this juncture, because when Jack got off the trolley car, he found himself in *Pawtuxet*.^{*} When he finally arrived at the party, he took advantage of his hostess’s obvious relief to see him by stealing a kiss while they were alone in the pantry. As Jack tells the story,

She was the *libling*** in the family—she was the youngest—and she couldn’t go out with nobody except the brother used to go out with her. . . . The brother saw [the kiss]—I’m no good to kiss a girl the first day, you can’t be any good.

For six months Chaya’s family forbade her to see him, until one day Jack ran into her walking with her mother and brother and proposed on the spot. Her brother was still opposed, but Jack was allowed to call at the house, and Chaya’s father took a liking to him. Mr. Goldstein believed he could tell about a man’s character by playing cards with him, so he challenged Jack to a game of “21.” Knowing nothing about cards, Jack lost the game, but won the father’s approval. But it was another year before Mr. Goldstein found the proper day, according to the Jewish calendar, for them to marry. Thus, although the young men of this generation formally had more freedom than the women, the

^{*}Pawtucket is north of Providence and Pawtuxet is south of Providence, a source of confusion for generations.

^{**}Darling. (Yiddish)

actions of both were determined by the constraints exerted by the women's families.

Parental influence did not always end with the wedding ceremony. As noted above, many young couples continued to live with or near one set of parents or the other and turned to them for advice (or sometimes received it unasked). Again, it was often through women that traditions were transmitted. Of the three mothers I interviewed, two felt that they followed their mothers' childrearing practices fairly closely. Bertha Brill said she never read any books on child psychology. "That came naturally," she felt. She was not too strict and didn't try anything "modern." Minnie Rosenfield never read any childrearing guides either, but "learned from experience." Her mother's presence during the births of her children meant that she did not have to be isolated during periods of uncertainty or difficulty. Celia Parvey felt that she raised her children as her parents had raised her. Yet she also incorporated advice from articles on childrearing, which she read because she "thought it was a good thing to know." She also talked over certain things with friends. At the time her children were born child experts advocated "scientific mothering," and Mrs. Parvey seems to have accepted this philosophy to some extent. For, when I asked her whether she nursed her babies on demand or on schedule, her reply was emphatic: "Oh no, regular schedules and everything, just the way they should. I never did just because they were hungry or anything." She said that she was not permissive, but "kept them pretty much under the line." Although Mrs. Parvey felt that she had not strayed far from her parents' influence, her recollections suggest that she also credited the thinking of childrearing professionals, probably because of her own training in normal school. Mrs. Brill and Mrs. Rosenfield depended solely on their own experience, and that of their mothers and friends in these matters.

In terms of Jewish custom, these women followed tradition somewhat selectively. All of them came from kosher homes, but neither Mrs. Rosenfield nor Mrs. Parvey followed those rules strictly in their own households. Mrs. Rosenfield began married life keeping a kosher house, but once when she had gone to Hartford for a few days, her "kosher went haywire, because [her father-in-law, who lived with her,] says, 'Its clean, it's kosher,'" and spoiled her system. She never re-established it, although she continued to cook Jewish dishes, and Friday night dinners and holiday meals became important rituals she shared with her children and grandchildren. Celia Parvey never established a kosher kitchen, but she also cooked traditionally and bought her meat from a kosher butcher. I did not ask Mrs. Brill directly about how she ran her home,

but the interview suggests that she did not follow her mother in observing kosher rules. She performed chores for her aging parents and shopped for them, but her mother continued to do her own cooking.

This selective following of tradition is not uncommon among Jewish immigrants of this generation. While they did not always follow customs strictly, they did perpetuate—through cooking, holidays, literature, and other activities—a culture that is distinctly Jewish. It allowed them to maintain continuity with a way of life they had left behind, while living in the midst of a very different, and sometimes hostile, environment. Some of the persons I interviewed had lived in homogeneous Jewish neighborhoods in large cities such as New York and Chicago. But in Rhode Island they were more likely to live in mixed neighborhoods and to meet people from other ethnic groups through work and school. Although relationships with gentile neighbors and co-workers were friendly, they did not lead to intermarriage or a loss of Jewish identity for any of my subjects.

Yet it was clear that the old culture would not be preserved or reproduced here intact, not only because there were structural and cultural impediments inherent in the American environment, but also because, to many immigrants, this was not a desirable goal. For some, like Sam Saltzman, the break with Orthodox Jewish tradition had begun even before he arrived in this country. As he saw it, two influences created change in the Polish Jewish community in the 19th century, before emigration had even been considered: Hasidism, and Jewish socialism. "A very new spirit came into the Jewish people in Poland," he believes. "It started with Hasidism, the group that did their prayers in a different form, in a different way, with a happier way for praying. Not just 'Give me, give me hell, give me bread, give me this, give me that,' but just with happiness praying. And in a much shorter way." Although the Hasidic transformation remained within the realm of religion, it opened the way for secular developments in Jewish culture. Yiddish literature began to flower, and, according to Mr. Saltzman, "in a very short time we find a very fine literature in the Jewish language. Just to mention a few would be enough: Mendele, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, and Asch, and many, many others that enriched the language through their writing of this literature." The profession of Yiddish writing at the turn of the century bespeaks the intensity of a pent-up need among Jews for secular cultural expression. The Bund affirmed these cultural developments and linked them to socialist politics—also popularized in Yiddish.

Exposure to this combination was a powerful experience to Sam Saltzman as a young man. "I was raised under this influence. . . . When I was about eleven years old, I joined up with the Bund . . . where they gave me to read their proclamations and their other literature, so I informed myself a lot about the progressive movement. And I remained in the progressive movement in the Jewish language all my life. . . ." At age 13 Sam moved to the industrial city of Lodz, where he continued his association with the Bund. His mobility and exposure to urban secular influences made him a likely candidate for emigration.

As we saw earlier, Jack Lapin's emigration was motivated by an imminent crisis; but he, too, was exposed to city life while waiting in Warsaw, an experience which probably eased somewhat his transition into American life. Jack's father was also a Hasid, but his piety made him less worldly, rather than more. In name, his father owned a hardware store; in fact, his mother ran it. "He didn't care for his store," Jack recalls. "Just went to synagogue all the time, you know. That was his life." It didn't make much sense to Jack, but he had little choice.

You can't say nothing. Your father and mother, they're something like God, you know. You got to keep your mouth shut. . . . When your mother said, "You sit up here," you sit up here with your father. . . . You got to—anything they say, you do it. Europe is different.

Jack picked up some new ideas from working in the store;

People coming in the store, . . . and this one talks and this one talks. . . . I never told my father this, never told my mother this. My mother, she was more religious than my father. She never told him anything that was going on in the world. My father, he didn't care. All he know was the books, that's all. He was a good learner.

Jack's father died on the day of his Bar Mitzvah, and he left the *shtetl** a few years later.** Although he was initially frightened to leave, once he was freed from the constrictions of his parents and the enclosed culture of his home town, Jack explored other customs. In Warsaw, he had money to burn (relatives in the United States had sent him funds through HIAS), and he spent it on finery:

I never had anything. I dressed up to kill, and with a cane. Everybody walked with canes up there, you know. And the canes had monograms. I didn't know what it means. To me it was a big thing.

*Village. (Yiddish)

**At that time, the Bar Mitzvah was not the elaborate ritual we know today; a young man was simply called to the pulpit to read from the Torah scroll.

When the rest of his family came from Byelorussia, his brother said, "We are hungry, you're dressed up like a king." But then Jack helped him buy an outfit as well, and he was appeased.

Although Jack displayed outward signs of secularization (he also shaved his *payess** when he came here), the effects of his earlier training were strong, and he has retained his commitment to Jewish ritual to this day. Bertha Brill's history also indicates that changes in appearance do not always signify total acculturation. She recalls that, when her father first came here, he was teased whenever he took the streetcar to work in Cranston. Children would pull his beard and call him "Santa Claus." So after a while he shaved it off. He also wrote to his wife, who was still in Austria, telling her to let her hair grow. When her mother's older sister heard this, she screamed and said, "*Shloime sguen a goy in America.*"** But her mother kept other traditions, remained kosher, and attended *shul* with the rest of the family. Thus it seems that Bertha's parents, like many other Jewish immigrants of that period, made certain adaptations in order to make life more livable for themselves, but preserved other customs which, for them, represented the core of their cultural and ethnic identity.

Taken together, the histories of the people I interviewed suggest that the Rhode Island Jewish community stems from a multi-faceted background. People came from many different countries in Europe, with stopovers at dozens of points both here and abroad. They came at different times and for different reasons, with no one set of religious or political commitments. They responded differently to cultural influences according to sex, age, and class.

Yet, even in this small and varied picture, we can detect certain commonalities and the texture of a distinctly Jewish culture, which these people have created and perpetuated. In each of the histories commitments to family and community have played an important part. At first, networks of relatives helped newcomers settle and find jobs. Then once the immigrants were established, they in turn began to help build a community for themselves. Their contributions took cultural, social, institutional, and financial forms. These immigrants did not produce carbon copies of Jewish life in the "old country"—nor was this their intention. The multifarious effects of the American context are evident

*From the Hebrew *peot*, "Side earlocks" or "curls", the long unshorn ear-ringlet hair and sideburn—locks worn by very Orthodox Jewish males. (Yiddish)

**"Shloime has become a gentile in America". (Yiddish) *Schloime* is Yiddish for Solomon.

in many aspects of their lives. But when elements of American culture were introduced into the Jewish community, its members often adapted or translated them, giving them a distinctly Jewish flavor. The community itself provided a subcultural context in which traditional values could be expressed, customs and rituals maintained, and an American-Jewish identity formed. By hearing about this process from some of the people who participated in it, we begin to comprehend its richness and complexity.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

All interviews took place at the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island in Providence in May and June, 1978. I wish to thank the following people, who generously gave me their time, and shared with me the details of their lives: Max Alexander, Bertha Brill, Anna Frucht, Jack Lapin, Celia Parvey, Minnie Rosenfield and Sam Saltzman.

Tapes of the interviews, along with typed transcripts of their contents, are on deposit in the archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. All of the subjects have kindly consented to make their oral histories available for scholarly and educational purposes.

I should like to add a final note: Although I came to this project as an historian, with specific scholarly goals in mind, I came away from it feeling more strongly than ever my own sense of identity as a Jewish woman, the granddaughter of immigrants. I could not listen to these people recount their lives without feeling deeply moved by the courage and determination they showed, the kindness and loyalty they expressed, throughout their long and often difficult lives. The abstractions of the typical historical article cannot begin to capture the emotional richness of their experiences. I have tried in this paper to let these people speak in their own voices about their individual and collective histories, so that we can all learn about our history from the people who made it.

SOME REMARKS ON THE FRAGILITY
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

by WILLIAM G. McLOUGHLIN*

In celebrating the eloquent exchange of sentiments between Moses Seixas and George Washington, we honor an ideal which has yet to become a reality for many people in the world. Wars of religion, bigotry, and persecution are being waged today with increasing fury and devastation in Ireland, Africa, and the Middle East. But while celebrating our peace and freedom here, we ought to remember that true religious liberty and equality were not realities in the United States in 1790 and in some respects have not been fully achieved even today. Major battles had yet to be fought after 1790, and significant battles are still being waged in our courts and legislative halls today to preserve, sustain, and enlarge the rights of freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state.

Here in Rhode Island we are justly proud of the fact that Roger Williams was among the first to set forth the ideal of liberty of conscience and to put it into practice. But those who have studied Rhode Island's history know that Williams's ideal was not respected in the neighboring American colonies and was sometimes delimited even in his own. Most of you will recall that in 1761 the colony of Rhode Island declined to grant citizenship to two respectable Jewish merchants who applied for it, and from 1719 to 1783 the colony specifically exempted Roman Catholics from religious equality.

The views of Roger Williams were not generally honored in colonial America, and he had almost no impact upon our founding fathers during the Revolution. Insofar as the leaders of our Revolution favored separation of church and state, they appear to have done so from principles diametrically opposed to those of Williams. And for many who lived in the colonies in 1776, religious liberty meant little more than "toleration" for non-Protestants. The United States avoided having an established church system largely because the different Protestant groups could not agree upon which particular denomination should be *the* established church.

Address at the annual George Washington Letter Ceremonies, Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island, August 20, 1978, under the auspices of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine, Inc.

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Roger Williams, you recall, believed that church and state should be separated in order to preserve the purity and holiness of the church from the corrupting power and tyranny of the state as he had seen it in Europe and England. But Thomas Jefferson and our founding fathers believed that church and state should be separated in order to preserve the purity and sanctity of the state from the corruption and tyranny of the church. I know of no instance in which Thomas Jefferson (or any other founding father) ever quoted any work of Roger Williams in order to support the principles of religious liberty and separationism. Williams, except among a few outcast Baptists of that day, was an almost forgotten man by 1776.

Hence it is not surprising that, when we declared independence from England, we did not mention liberty of conscience or separation of church and state as among the principles for which we fought. There is no mention of religious liberty either in the Declaration or in the Articles of Confederation, which constituted our first constitution. On the contrary, in most state constitutions written after 1776 there were specific statements denying liberty of conscience—or at least denying equal rights to those who professed religious views contrary to those of the majority. Most of our state constitutions, it is true, contained some phrase honoring the liberty of conscience in principle, but most of them also denied the right to hold political office to persons who did not conform to the prevailing religious opinion in that state. The state of South Carolina declared in its constitution in 1778 that, “The Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be the established religion of this state.” The constitution of Maryland (a state often cited for its heritage of religious freedom) declared in 1776 that “the legislature may, in their discretion, lay a general and equal tax for the support of the Christian religion.” Maryland also (like many other states) required all officeholders to be Christians. Delaware’s constitution included an oath of office requiring belief in the Trinity; and many state oaths of office, including Vermont’s (1779), specifically required belief in the divine inspiration of both the Old and the New Testaments. Not only did such oaths deny religious equality to Jewish citizens, but several states had oaths which excluded Roman Catholics from office. For example, oaths of office in New York and New Jersey required duly elected or appointed officials to deny allegiance to any foreign authority in either civil or ecclesiastical matters—a measure obviously designed to undermine *spiritual* allegiance to the Pope in Rome.

Thomas Jefferson, of course, opposed all of these test oaths, but in order to be consistent he had to argue that the United States of America was not a Christian nation. For saying this he was roundly denounced by most church-going Americans, and the most distinguished jurists in the new country flatly denied Jefferson's claim. In the famous case of *New York v. Ruggles* in 1811 Chancellor James Kent of New York sentenced a man to jail for blaspheming against the Christian ideal of God, saying that to do so was "to strike at the root of moral obligation and weaken the security of the social ties." The new nation, it appeared, could not be secure if its courts did not prosecute non-believers. As late as 1836 a man in Massachusetts was sent to prison for two years for printing a statement the courts there considered blasphemous.

It is ironic that, when Thomas Jefferson sought to dis-establish the Episcopal Church in Virginia and to establish his now famous statute of religious liberty, he was opposed by many of the leading citizens and church people, among them Patrick Henry, John Marshall, and George Washington. These Virginians believed that unless churches were supported by compulsory religious taxes, the community would suffer grave moral damage. So in 1778 Patrick Henry proposed a religious tax, the proceeds of which would be distributed proportionately among all existing denominations. To many this seemed both wise and tolerant. When George Washington was asked how he felt about Henry's bill for religious taxation, he made a statement which is, fortunately, not so well remembered or so celebrated as the statement he made here at Touro Synagogue five years later: "Although no man's sentiments are more opposed to any kind of restraint upon religious principles than mine are," he wrote, "yet I must confess that I am not amongst the number of those who are so much alarmed at the thought of making people pay towards the support of that which they profess." James Madison's famous "Memorial" in 1785 was directed expressly against this statement, and rightly declared that the power to tax is the power to destroy or to persecute. Yet today we are still struggling over this very same principle, not in regard to explicit church support, but in regard to the much more subtle church-state question of compulsory education.

It is sometimes forgotten that one of the great compromises entered into among the framers of our federal Constitution in 1787 involved this very same question. In 1787 all of the states in New England, except Rhode Island, still laid compulsory religious taxes for the support of religion. Had Jefferson's ideal of religious liberty prevailed in 1787, the

Constitution might well have undermined this religious establishment of the old Puritan churches in New England. Out of deference to New England the framers said nothing whatever in the Constitution about religious liberty or the separation of church and state (beyond prohibiting any religious test for federal officeholding). When Washington wrote to Moses Seixas in 1790, the First Amendment had not yet been adopted. And as we know, the first amendment was never ratified by some New England states because they were not yet ready to grant the principle of religious equality. Not until 1818 did Connecticut finally abandon its system of compulsory religious taxes; Massachusetts continued the practice until 1833. Not until the twentieth century did the United States Supreme Court, making use of the 14th Amendment, begin to apply the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the states.

When Washington and Seixas in 1790 praised the new nation for having "a Government which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance," they referred of course to the absence of explicit *federal* laws discriminating against religious belief or practice. They did not, and could not, have been referring to state laws; the various states of the Union still had far to go before they fully understood the principles of Roger Williams or of Thomas Jefferson. Throughout the nineteenth century this struggle continued.

We are all familiar today with the acronym WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant). There is no doubt that the vast majority of Americans until well into the present century considered this to be a WASP nation—a nation, that is, dedicated to the principles, beliefs, and practices of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Public leaders (North and South, East and West) proudly said on public platforms, "This is a white man's country" and "This is a Protestant country." They meant, as the noted British observer, Lord Bryce, pointed out in 1886:

In most States there exist laws punishing blasphemy or profane swearing by the name of God . . . laws forbidding trade or labour on the Sabbath The Bible is (in most States) read in the public State-supported schools. . . . The matter may be summed up by saying that Christianity is in fact understood to be, though not the legally established religion, yet the national religion. . . . They deem the general acceptance of Christianity to be one of the main sources of their national prosperity and their nation a special object of Divine favour.

Because America was “a chosen nation” in covenant with God to uphold Christianity—and particularly evangelical Protestant Christianity—“Americans conceive,” Bryce said, “that the religious character of a government consists in nothing but the religious belief of the individual citizens and the conformity of their conduct to that belief.”

The conformity of conduct is, of course, only partially a matter of law. In fact, by far the most powerful force of social conformity is public opinion. Where public opinion is strong and united it will sometimes even sanction the abridgment of its own laws and its own principles. Nowhere was this more flagrant than in the frequent disregard of Washington’s famous words throughout the course of our history by local mobs and public opinion. The law might give to bigotry no sanction or to persecution no assistance, but sometimes the law was strangely unenforced or even unenforceable against outraged public opinion and self-righteous efforts at religious conformity. The state of Rhode Island was a scene of constant bigotry against Roman Catholic immigrants—Irish, French-Canadian, Italian, Portuguese. Politically this persecution was evident in the property qualifications for voting which were designed—and which effectively worked—for a century specifically to exclude the foreign-born from exercising the franchise. In Massachusetts in 1834 a mob burned a Roman Catholic convent, and in Philadelphia mobs stoned Catholic churches and church-goers while the local law enforcement agencies sat by and did nothing. In the Middle West the Church of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) was driven by mobs from Ohio to Missouri, from Missouri to Illinois, and finally, after their township there was sacked and burned and their religious leaders murdered in 1844, they were driven out of the country to what was then the territory claimed by Mexico.

Both by law and by so-called “Gentlemen’s agreement” Americans excluded Chinese and Japanese from entering the country on the grounds that they could never assimilate to the WASP way of life. There was a distinct belief that Oriental religions were inferior, as well as Oriental peoples; this was evident in the enormous amount of time, money, and energy which went into foreign missionary activity in Asia in these years to save the souls of “benighted heathens.”

Probably the most callous disregard of religious liberty occurred in our treatment of the American Indians. Not only were these native Americans forcibly driven from their land and put on reservations, but they were denied the right to testify in court because they were pagans. A pagan people was assumed to deny the truth of the Bible, and there-

fore their word could not be trusted even in cases where they were direct witnesses to illegal actions or were themselves subject to illegal persecutions. What was worse, after the Civil War their children were forcibly taken from them and placed in missionary schools on the reservations, where they were compelled to speak only English and were taught by missionaries who indoctrinated them, against their parents' wishes, into the Christian religion. They were not only forced to pray and sing Christian hymns but punished for practicing their own religion. This religious persecution was sanctioned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, supported by public tax money, and condoned by Christian churches until the middle of the present century.

I do not wish to belabor the point, and I have promised to talk no more than half an hour. But anyone who reads the daily newspapers must be aware that our heritage of religious liberty and equality is neither a fixed and settled matter, nor a secure and certain right. It is, rather, a fragile and tenuous ideal which is threatened every day by apathy, ignorance, and conflicting group interests. We can see this in the current debate in Congress over tuition credits for children in religious elementary and secondary schools; in the debate over the exemption of church property from public taxation; in the litigation over the Sunday closing of places of business and the rights of workers to take Saturday as a day of worship. We can see it in the effort to amend our constitution to overrule the Supreme Court decision against required prayer in public schools. We can see it in the persecution of young adults who join new cults such as the Hare Krishna, the Children of God, and the Unification Church; and we can see it even in Rhode Island where angry citizens and the *Providence Journal* denounced a suggestion by the American Civil Liberties Union that public school officials should show more concern at Christmas and Easter time for children whose faith does not include these as religious holy days.

No rights are ever secure. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Among the nations of the world the United States has achieved a notable record for its commitment to religious liberty and equality, but even here there have been dangerous tendencies at work from time to time which threaten to undermine those ideals. We live today in such threatening times. It is questionable whether the First Amendment could be ratified today if we did not already have it. Though we have it, it could be easily eroded. We do well, therefore, to honor those who in the past and over the years have worked steadfastly to uphold those:

principles. There is no more fitting time or place to do so than here in Touro Synagogue today.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Because this was written as a public address, I did not feel it necessary to include the usual scholarly apparatus of footnotes. However, for those interested in reading further in this subject, the incidents and quotations in the talk can be found in the following works: Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972); Thomas I. Emerson, *Toward a General Theory of the First Amendment* (New York: Random House, 1966); Evarts B. Greene, *Religion and the State* (New York, New York University Press, 1941); Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York, Garden City Press, 1955); Milton R. Konvitz, *Expanding Liberties* (New York, Viking Press, 1966); Milton R. Konvitz, *Fundamental Liberties of a Free People* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1957); Milton R. Konvitz, *Religious Liberty and Conscience* (New York, Viking Press, 1968); Philip B. Kurland, *Religion and the Law and Church and State* (Chicago, Aldine Press, 1962); Gustavus Myers, *History of Bigotry in the United States* (New York, Random House, 1943); Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State and Freedom*, rev. ed. (Boston, Beacon Press, 1967); Anson Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States*, 3 vols. (New York, Harpers & Co., 1950); John F. Wilson, *Church and State in American History* (Boston, D. C. Heath Co., 1965).

DEDICATION OF THE SOUTH FENCE, PATRIOTS' PARK
AT TOURO SYNAGOGUE, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
REMARKS OF LOUIS BARUCH RUBINSTEIN,
PRESIDING AT THE DEDICATION, AUGUST 20, 1978

Rabbi Lewis, Senator McKenna, Mayor Donnelly, Doctor Goldowsky,* citizens of Newport, and Friends of Touro Synagogue:

It is with great pride and pleasure that we gather here at Patriots' Park to dedicate a beautiful new fence, which enhances this lovely adjunct to this National Shrine of the United States of America. The historical records show that the original dedication of this holy and illustrious House of Worship took place on the second day of December, 1763. It was also the first day of Hanukkah of the Jewish calendar year 5523, the Feast of Lights, a day of Dedication and Reconsecration commemorating the cleansing and renewal of the temple in Jerusalem under Judas Maccabeus some nineteen hundred and twenty-eight years earlier, after the victory over the Syrians.

In the *Newport Mercury* dated December 5, 1763 (which incidentally is my birth date—not the year—just the day), the following item appeared:

In the afternoon was the dedication of the new synagogue in this Town. It began by a handsome procession in which were carried the Books of the Law to be deposited in the Ark. Several portions of the Scripture, and of their Service with a prayer for the Royal Family were read and finely sung by the Priest and People. There were present many Gentlemen and Ladies. The Order and Decorum, the Harmony and Solemnity of the Music, together with a handsome Assembly of People, in an Edifice the most perfect of the Temple kind perhaps in America, and splendidly illuminated, could not but raise in the Mind a faint Idea of the Majesty and Grandeur of the Ancient Jewish Worship mentioned in the Scripture. Dr. Isaac de Abraham Touro performed the Service.

Touro Synagogue was dedicated with meaningful ceremony before a host of invited dignitaries, such as we have here today. It is recorded that a great number of notables, not only from Newport but from other towns and cities were present. The parallel is striking.

*Rabbi Theodore Lewis, spiritual leader of Jeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue); Rhode Island State Senator Robert McKenna, Vice President of Salve Regina College; Honorable Humphrey J. Donnelly, III, mayor of Newport, Rhode Island; Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., president, The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine, Inc.

It may be noted that some thirteen years prior to the Declaration of Independence, a prayer for the Royal Family was *de rigueur* in all houses of worship. We should also note that when the British later occupied Newport, the great majority of the Jewish community fled to other areas, including Rabbi Touro, who first went to New York and then to Jamaica, leaving two of his children, Judah and Abraham, to the care of his brother-in-law, Moses Michael Hays, in Boston. Their ties to Rhode Island are well known.

The full ceremony that took place on that day was most impressive. There were present many of the leaders of the Newport community and its environs, both Jews and non-Jews. Among them was the minister of the Second Congregational Church of Newport, the Reverend Ezra Stiles, a great friend of Rabbi Touro, of Aaron Lopez, and of many of the other leaders of the community, who had put such great effort into the building of the new temple. Doctor Stiles, who was later to become president of Yale University, was excited and entranced both by the proceedings and all the details, architectural and ornamental, of the synagogue and its furnishings. His detailed account is an exceptional chronicle, providing source material for all historians who have come after him.

History relates that on the day of the dedication those who were privileged to be in the edifice came early and occupied every available space, with the men seated in the sanctuary on the main floor, and the women occupying the gallery, as was the tradition.

At the precise moment previously established for the commencement of the ceremonies, the main doors were closed and a hush descended on the assemblage. From without the door, Rabbi Touro knocked on the door thrice, and intoned the ancient liturgy: "*Seuh Shearim Rashechem*"—"Lift up your heads, oh ye gates—so that the King of Glory may enter." From within came the query: "*Mee zeh Melech Hakavod*"—"Who is the King of Glory?" And the reply came firmly: "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory, Selah."

The congregation member who was granted the privilege flung wide the doors, and there entered at the head of a procession the Rabbi, followed by those members of the congregation who were carrying the holy Scrolls of the Law. As the procession walked in, the congregation took up a chant of the Psalms of David. Then the perpetual lamp hanging in front of the Ark of the Covenant was lit, and Rabbi Touro chanted the *Shehechyanu*, a prayer which blesses the Lord for granting

life, sustaining all, and permitting those in attendance to be present for that season. He was followed by a procession of gentlemen carrying the beautifully adorned Scrolls of the Law, with all of the congregation chanting selections from the psalms. Then the procession circled the Synagogue seven times with those previously chosen carrying the scrolls, handing them over to others at each circuit. This has always been a great traditional honor. There followed a prayer for the royal family, this being some 12 years prior to the Declaration of Independence.

While my comments link the present dedication to the early historical event dedicating the synagogue itself, dedication of a fence is not a new thing for Touro. In the 1820s, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, Abraham Touro, a son of Isaac, dedicated fences around the cemetery and the synagogue. Then in 1842, his brother, the famed Judah Touro, hired an architect from Boston, built the granite fence still standing, and dedicated that fence. It is in the spirit of these great forebears of this community and in celebration of our traditions and heritage that we have all gathered here today to dedicate, as a part of Patriots' Park, a new venture in the progress of this greatly revered house of the Lord, the oldest edifice of its kind in these United States. On behalf of the synagogue, the friends of Touro Synagogue, and the city of Newport, and as a member of the Governor's Heritage Commission, on behalf of the state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, I welcome you to this dedication.

At this dedication we are not about to attempt a duplication of the majestic and inspirational ritual which was so appropriate to the dedication of Touro Synagogue as a House of Worship. But it is with a deeply felt appreciation of those years of religious and spiritual liberty which all of us here are able to enjoy in the land of Roger Williams, that we do dedicate this decorative and useful fence, which now surrounds Patriots' Park. I am honored now to ask Rabbi Theodore Lewis, the spiritual leader of Touro Synagogue for so many years, to utter that same blessing of dedication which his predecessor chanted some 215 years ago.

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE, NATIONAL HISTORIC SHRINE, INC.
AUGUST 20, 1978

by SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

I should like to welcome you to this, the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Touro Synagogue. It is pleasant to see so many of you here on this warm afternoon in this beautiful and elegant edifice.

First let me tell you briefly something about this organization. Touro Synagogue was designated a National Historic Site by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior in 1946. The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue was chartered in 1948, making this year our thirtieth anniversary. The official designation of the organization is The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, National Historic Shrine, Inc. It is a separate corporate entity from the Synagogue and its Congregation, which receives no federal funds to support its operations. The Society is essentially the fund-raising arm of the Synagogue—which in fact could not adequately support itself in appropriate style with the income derived from the dues of its one hundred member families. The Society of Friends welcomes contributions from any source to carry out its function of maintaining the edifice and its environs.

A few years ago its bylaws were amended to broaden its responsibilities to encompass the cemetery at the junction of Kay and Touro Streets, because the deterioration of its fences as well as those of the Synagogue demanded urgent attention. The Society has now also expanded its interests to include Patriots' Park, the land west of the Synagogue which constitutes its western approaches and provides visibility of the Synagogue from that direction.

During the past two or three years, during the regimes of Samuel Friedman, my predecessor as president, and myself, the restoration of the old granite and iron fences of the Synagogue and of the cemetery cost \$112,000. The fence of Patriots' Park cost \$34,000. The latter was partially funded by a federal bicentennial grant of \$17,000 and a state Jewish Ethnic Heritage Subcommittee grant of \$2,000. Of the total liabilities for these projects of \$146,000, all but \$30,000 has been paid. Our cash assets at this time are some \$5,000. Of the \$30,000 indebtedness, \$25,000 of the sum represents an internal debt, or borrowing from

Synagogue endowments, for which we pay interest to the Synagogue at the prevailing rates. The remainder is a bank loan of \$5,000.

Our future plans include further development of the park and maintenance of the Synagogue as necessary.

We are currently conducting a membership campaign, especially targeted upon Life Memberships at \$500. Members of all categories will be welcomed with open arms. Contributions, of course, are also welcome, and we shall seek grants from foundations.

Our immediate plans for the park call for construction of a fence on the north side and the erection of a flagpole (the mast for this purpose—formerly the mast of an America's Cup defender—has been contributed by Mr. Louis Chartier, the contractor for the fences). We also envision a podium in stone, and stone markers for each of the 13 original states bearing the names of Jewish patriots, one from each state.

We have been offered the assistance of the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior in planning for the further development of the park. We shall certainly take advantage of this offer.

Before closing I should like to thank all of those members of the Board of Directors whose help has been indispensable and Rabbi Theodore Lewis for his faithful attendance to the duties of Secretary of the Society and for his always gentle and wise counsel. I trust that when we meet again we shall have further significant progress to report to you.

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association took place on Sunday afternoon, May 21, 1978 in the auditorium of the Jewish Community Center, 401 Elmgrove Avenue, Providence, and was called to order by the President, Benton H. Rosen at twenty minutes of three. He made brief remarks on the Association's activities, especially of the past year, and made an appeal for the giving of documents and pictures to the Association.

Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer, reported a balance as of January 1, 1978 of \$1,028.83 in the savings account and \$230.25 in the checking account for a total of \$1,259.08. The three special endowment funds total to date \$2,207.49 as follows: The Rosen Book Fund, \$1,077.70; the Goldowsky Research Scholarship Fund, \$798.11; and the Strasmich General Fund, \$331.68. Mr. Sweet, Finance Chairman, projected a budget for the ensuing year of \$7,200 with an estimated income of \$8,500.

The Annual Report was read by the Secretary, Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky.

Editor of the *Notes*, Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky gave a brief historical background of the Association and commented on the current researcher's work: Ms. Sonya Michel's oral history project at the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. He spoke of the three chief functions of the Association, viz. collecting, research, and publication, and noted that the Association was hopeful of enlarging its horizons by instituting an Academic Council.

Mrs. Abraham Horvitz, Librarian, emphasized the need for the giving of documents and photographs, both personal and institutional. She reported on the genealogy service she has been providing people with the help of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Students from the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and Brown University use the Association's resources. As a charter member of a new organization, Rhode Island Archivists, the Association through her is learning how to apply for grants. The group was formed to bring together librarians of special collections.

The Nominating Committee headed by Melvin L. Zurier presented the following slate of officers for re-election: Benton H. Rosen, President; Dr. Marvin Pitterman, Vice President; Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Secretary; and Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer. With no counter-nominations, the Secretary was instructed to cast one ballot for the slate.

Mrs. Sweet read the roster of thirty-two new members who have joined the Association since February.

Mr. Rosen introduced the Eighth Annual David Charak Adelman lecturer, Edward N. Beiser, Ph.D., professor of political science at Brown University, who spoke on "Jews and Liberals: Bakke and the Nazis in Skokie, Illinois". Without providing any solutions, Professor Beiser posed the thesis that these two current phenomena are evidence of a tension between Judaism and liberalism. Jews traditionally in their liberalism take the collective or group stance, whereas in the Bakke and Skokie cases, they are stressing the importance of individualism. In the Skokie case a distinction must be made between that which is immediately dangerous and merely offensive; it is a matter of relativism and taste, and taste is a profoundly individualistic matter. In the Bakke case the Jews are on the side of the importance of individualism as against collectivism or the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 P.M. after which a collation was served. Mrs. Marvin Pitterman, Chairman of Hospitality, was assisted by Mrs. Benton H. Rosen, Mrs. Bernard Segal, Mrs. Erwin E. Strasmich, and Mrs. Louis I. Sweet.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky
Secretary

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

by SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

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

1. *South Providence*. Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-P-2. Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Providence, R. I., September, 1978. 82 pages, paperback.
 - Pages 37-39. Describes the Jewish settlement of South Providence starting in the latter part of the 19th century and extending to the 1950s.
 - Pages 39-42. Describes architectural development of homes in the area, some the result of activities of Jewish developers. Photograph of Temple Beth-El.
 - Page 47. View of Willard Avenue Retail Section in 1948.
 - Pages 68-81. Brief descriptions of several Jewish related buildings and houses.
2. *Jewish Landmarks of New York*. A Travel Guide and History. By Bernard Postal and Lionel Koppman. Fleet Press Corporation, New York. Revised Edition, 1978. 287 pages, paperback.
 - Page 54. Mentions the marriage of August Belmont, who married into the family of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry of Rhode Island, famed victorious commander at the Battle of Lake Erie. Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont built Belcourt, a Newport summer "cottage," in 1892.
 - Page 101. Describes the original site of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City. See next item.
 - Pages 109-112. Describes the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Congregation Shearith Israel) "It has . . . many connections with other historic American congregations such as Yeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue) in Newport, R. I." Also: "To this day, the congregation holds the legal title to Newport's Historic Touro Synagogue. For use of the Touro Synagogue, the Newport Jewish community pays the New York congregation one dollar a year for rent."
3. *Newport History*. Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 171, Vol. 51, Part 3. Summer, 1978.
 - Pages 45-60. *Eighteenth Century Newport and its Merchants*. Part II. Describes the activities of the small Jewish community and mentions Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizer and their quests for naturalization, Elizer in New York and Lopez in Massachusetts.
4. *Rhode Island—A Bicentennial History*. By William G. McLoughlin. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York and the American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, 1978. 240 pages.
 - Page 34 Jews Tolerated by R. I.
 - Pages 47-48. Jews in Newport in the 17th and 18th centuries.
 - Pages 64-65. Aaron Lopez and others in the mercantile life of Newport.
 - Pages 75-76. Jews in 18th century Newport had political difficulties, but no social or economic discrimination.
 - Page 105. Moses Seixas and the Washington letter to Touro Synagogue.
 - Page 183. Jewish immigration to R. I.
 - Page 214. Jews in politics in R. I. Frank Licht, the first Jewish governor of the state.

5. *The Jewish Legion of Valor. The Story of Jewish Heroes in the Wars of the Republic and a General History of the Military Exploits of the Jews Through the Ages*, by Captain Sydney G. Gumpertz. Pub. by Sydney G. Gumpertz, New York, 1934. 358 pages. Gift of Harold Silverman.
 - Pages 97, 121-122. Leopold Karpeles, Color Sergeant, later head of a Providence family, was a Medal of Honor winner in the Civil War.
 - Page 317. Harry Cutler, R. I. National Guard (retired), awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his services as chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Welfare Board.
6. *Guess Who's Jewish in American History. From Wyatt Earp's wife to Sandy Koufax, etc.* By Lionel Koppman and Bernard Postal. A Signet Book, pub. by The New American Library, Inc., N.Y. 1978. Paperback. 322 pages.
 - Page 119. Congressional Medal of Honor winner Sergeant Leopold Karpeles, while serving as color bearer, rallied retreating troops at Battle of The Wilderness, May 6, 1864. See also Item 5 above.
 - Pages 53 and 180. Rabbi Isaac Touro of Congregation Jeshuat Israel of Newport, R. I. (Touro Synagogue).
 - Pages 89, 180-181, 273, 275. Judah Touro, Son of Isaac, philanthropist.
 - Pages 180-181, 209, 311. Touro Synagogue.
 - Page 209. Myer Myers, silversmith of New York. Myers items in Touro Synagogue.
 - Pages 304-305. Washington letter to the Jews of Newport.
 - Pages 310-311. Jewish Cemetery in Newport, R. I.
 - Page 311. Touro Synagogue designated National Historic Site.
7. *Toledot, The Journal of Jewish Genealogy*. Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1978.
 - Pages 14-15. "Local Jewish History and Genealogy: The Rhode Island Experience." By Zachary M. Baker. Describes the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. "Local history sources can be among the most useful repositories of genealogical information." "Its publication activities provide an example for newer societies to follow . . ."
8. *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, Nov. 1978.
 - Pages 133-154. "Without Ghettoism: A History of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, 1906-1930." By Jenna Weissman Joselit. Opposite page 153 is a photo showing "Delegates to the Menorah Societies Conference at Brown University, November 1927." The group picture was taken in front of Rockefeller Hall, now Faunce House. There was a Menorah Chapter at Brown University.

NECROLOGY

BILLINGKOFF, MORRIS, born in Russia, came to this country as a young boy. He won claim in 1919 to the American flyweight boxing title, but relinquished it to compete in the bantamweight division.

Under the name of YOUNG MONTREAL, he rose to national prominence in the 1920s as a bantamweight boxer. He never won the bantamweight title, but he fought on even terms with Joe Lynch and Pete Herman with the bouts going to no decision. He also fought a series of bouts with Providence bantamweight Terry Martin.

During his career he fought 106 professional bouts, winning 11 by knockouts and 46 by decision. He was knocked out only once. He often headed the boxing card at the old Infantry Hall, Providence, and the Marieville Gardens, North Providence. In later years he volunteered his services as a boxing coach at the Providence CYO and at various orphanages.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, June 27, 1978.

BLACHER, BERTHA, born February 22, 1902, daughter of the late Max and Lillian (Marshak) Adler.

A lifelong resident of Providence, she was a member of Temple Emanuel Sisterhood, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, The Providence Chapter of Hadassah, and The Miriam Hospital Women's Association.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, May 22, 1978.

CHASAN, DOROTHY, wife of Louis Chasan, daughter of the late Abraham and Bessie Rosen, was born in Russia on April 14, 1895. She had lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for many years before moving to Providence, Rhode Island in 1949.

Vice president of the South Side Jewish Community Center Senior Citizens, she was also a life member and on the Board of Directors of the Pioneer Women, a life member of the Mizrahi Women, a member of the Cranston's Senior Citizens, and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, December 7, 1977.

CHASET, DOCTOR NATHAN, born in Providence, Rhode Island on May 7, 1911, son of the late Benjamin Chaset and the late Eva (Goldstein) Chaset-Rosenfeld.

A graduate of Classical High School in Providence, Brown University, and the Boston University School of Medicine, he served his residency at the Massachusetts Memorial and Beth Israel Hospitals in Boston.

A former chief of the Department of Urology at The Miriam and Women and Infants Hospitals in Providence, he was also director of the vasectomy clinic at Women and Infants and chief of the Department of Urology at Cranston General Hospital. He also served as attending urologist at the Veterans Administration Hospital, Davis Park, and as consultant in urology at the Rhode Island Hospital, Woonsocket Hospital, Kent County Memorial Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, Roger Williams General Hospital, Newport Hospital, and the Veterans Administration Regional Office.

In 1974 he served as president of the Rhode Island Medical Society, as well as president and executive committee chairman of the New England Section of the American Urological Association. He was also a co-founder and director of the Rhode Island Renal Institution and a past chairman of the state's Medical-Legal Committee. He was a diplomat of the National Board of Medical Examiners and of the American Board of Urology; a member of the American Medical Association; a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons; a member of the American Association of Clinical Urologists, the state Board of Medical Review, and the Providence Senior Citizens Task Force. An assistant clinical professor at the

Brown University Medical School, he formerly had been an instructor at the Boston University School of Medicine.

From 1942 to 1946 he served in the Medical Corps of the United State Army, attaining the rank of Major. He received an official commendation from the Government of Iran for his accomplishments in the Iranian Army Hospitals. He was a member of Temple Beth-El of Providence.

Died in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, January 18, 1978.

COHEN, REUBEN, born in Russia on March 3, 1907, son of the late Isaac and Minna (Horowitz) Cohen.

A graduate of the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy in 1926, he was the owner and operator of the Ivy Apothecary on Hope Street in Providence for 18 years. He had previously operated the Eaton Pharmacy in Providence from 1930 to 1960. He was a member of Temple Emanuel and its Men's Club; Roosevelt Lodge No. 42, AF & AM; the Trowel Club; and the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died in Narragansett, Rhode Island, July 20, 1978.

DARMAN, AUTHUR I., born September 28, 1889 in Kurelvitz, Russia, son of the late Louis and Sylvia Darman.

One of Woonsocket, Rhode Island's leading and best known citizens, he was president and treasurer of Stadium Realty Corp., and the Aidco Corp. A lifelong Republican, he was formerly active in city politics. He was much interested in the acting profession; and in 1945 an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* described him as suffering from the strange delusion that actors are people and, as such, are entitled to courtesy, kindness, and hospitality. He was a former member of the Woonsocket Republican City Committee and the Republican State Central Committee, a charter member of the city's Redevelopment Agency, a former member of

the city's charter revision commission, a former chairman of the city's Industrial Board, and a former chairman of the Rhode Island Industrial Development Commission.

A former president of the Woonsocket Council of the Boy Scouts of America, he was a leading member of the Woonsocket Jewish Community. He was honorary president for life of Congregation B'nai Israel Synagogue of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, serving as its leader from 1916 to 1946. He was a former president of the Rhode Island Zionist Region; a charter member of the Woonsocket Lodge, B'nai B'rith, and a former member of the Board of Overseers of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York.

He served as a trustee of the Jewish Home for the Aged in Providence, a member of the board of trustees of The Miriam Hospital in Providence, an honorary director of the Jewish Children's Home and Foundation in Providence, and a member of the Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine, Inc., of Newport, Rhode Island.

His fraternal and professional memberships included the American and Woonsocket Chambers of Commerce and the Woonsocket Lions Club, of which he was the first president. In 1949 he received an honorary Doctor of Science Degree from the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy and Allied Sciences.

Died in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, May 31, 1978.

FREEDMAN, DOCTOR STANLEY, born in Poland in 1897, son of the late Abraham and Evelyn Freedman. A former director of pediatric allergy at Rhode Island Hospital, he was also a founder of the allergy clinics at St. Joseph's, Roger Williams General and The Miriam Hospitals.

He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and of the American Academy of Allergy, a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatrics, past president of the New England Allergy Society, and honorary president of the Rhode Island Society of

Allergy. During World War II he was a major in the Army Medical Corps from 1941 to 1946. He was a member of Temple Emanuel, and a member of the Brotherhood of Free Masons of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Died in West Palm Beach, Florida, August 16, 1978.

GOLDSTEIN, ABRAHAM E., born in Chelsea, Massachusetts on November 4, 1901, son of the late Louis and Rose Goldstein.

He was president and founder of the Abraham E. Goldstein Company and the Imperial Folding Box Company, both of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. He was the president of the former Roaring Brook Spinning Mills, Woonsocket, Rhode Island. He was a member of Temple Emanuel and its Men's Club, Congregation Beth David in Providence, and Congregation B'nai Israel of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. He was also a member of the Redwood Lodge, AF & AM; the Palestine Temple; and the Woonsocket Rotary Club; past exalted ruler of the Woonsocket Elks; past president of Woonsocket B'nai B'rith; and formerly on the board of directors of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. He was also active in many other charitable organizations.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, July 30, 1978.

LEDERER, GEORGE T., born in Chicago, Illinois, March 24, 1880, son of the late Elias Joachim Lederer. A resident of East Providence in recent years, he had been a resident in the Providence area for more than 70 years.

He was the retired owner of the Providence Stock Company, a jewelry manufacturing firm in the Lederer Building on Stewart Street in Providence, with which he had been affiliated for fifty years before retiring 20 years prior to his death.

He had been a member of The Manufacturing Jewelers' Association of Rhode Island, was active in the Boy Scouts in Greater

Rhode Island for many years, and had been a member of the Civitan Club of Providence. He was one of the oldest living members of Temple Beth-El, having joined the congregation in 1903.

His widow, the former Dorothy Jacobs, daughter of the late Harry Loeb Jacobs, founder and president of Bryant College, is his only immediate survivor. A member of a prominent Rhode Island Jewish family, his remains are interred in the family tomb in Temple Beth-El Cemetery on Reservoir Avenue in Providence.

Died October 8, 1977.

LEVITT, JACK, born in Providence, Rhode Island on February 12, 1905, the son of the late Mayer and Lena (Chaset) Levitt. A resident of Warwick, Rhode Island for thirty years. Mr. Levitt for the last eight years was president of NATCO Products of West Warwick, Rhode Island.

A World War II Army Veteran, he was also a member of Temple Beth Israel, the Temple Men's Club, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the Rotary Club.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, October 9, 1978.

MARKOFF, RUTH, widow of Samuel Markoff, was born in Boston, Massachusetts and was a resident of Providence, Rhode Island for more than 65 years.

Chairman of the Board of Paramount Lines, Inc., she was a member of Temple Beth-El, an honorary life member of the National Council of Jewish Women's Association, and an honorary life member of the Sisterhood of Temple Beth-El. She was a founder of the Providence Philharmonic Orchestra and the Chopin Club of Providence. She was a past President of the Rhode Island

Federation of Women's Clubs, president of the North End Dispensary during the 1920s and 1930s, and during World War II, chairman of the Council House and an active volunteer of the Little House on the Mall, USO. She also served in numerous other charitable organizations.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, July 2, 1978.

MELLER, NANCY B., wife of Robert Meller, born in Providence, Rhode Island, September 25, 1917. She was a daughter of the late Solomon and Ann (Weinstein) Brandt.

A life-long resident of Providence, she attended the Providence Public Schools and was a graduate of Hope Street High School in Providence.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, May 18, 1978.

REICH, DOCTOR JACOB, born in Poland, October 5, 1909, son of the late Israel and Pesha Reich. A practicing physician in Rhode Island from 1938 to 1950, he served since 1950 as anesthesiologist at The Miriam Hospital. He was a member of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. During World War II he was a captain in the Army Medical Corps in Europe. He was a member of Congregation Shaare Zedek and Temple Emanuel of Providence.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, August 14, 1978.

SAMDPERIL, SOPHIE, widow of Isadore Samdperil, daughter of the late Isaac and Tema Forman, was born in Russia.

A life member of the Jewish home for the Aged of Rhode Island and the Providence Chapter of Hadassah, she was also a member of Temple Emanuel, Temple Beth David, The Miriam Hospital, the Providence Hebrew Day School, and the Jewish Community Center of Providence, Rhode Island.

Died in Miami Beach, Florida, December 12, 1977.

WEBBER, DOCTOR JOSEPH B., born in Russia on April 3, 1894, son of the late Banice and Alice (Barkan) Webber.

A graduate of Tufts University Medical School in 1919, practiced in Providence from 1920 until his retirement in 1975. A fellow of the American College of Surgeons, he was also a member of the Rhode Island Medical Society, the Providence Medical Association, and the Providence Surgical Society. A past president of The Miriam Hospital Staff Association, he had been on the staffs of the Miriam Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, Roger Williams General Hospital, and the Charles V. Chapin Hospital.

He was a member of Temple Beth-El; Roosevelt Lodge, AF & AM; the Farband Zionist Alliance; the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association; and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, January 29, 1978.

ERRATA AND ADDENDA

The following items refer to RIJHN Vol. 7, No. 3, November, 1977.

Page 388. The following statement regarding the teaching of Hebrew at the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island appears in the first paragraph: "JORI children attended . . . the Sunday school conducted by Temple Emanuel, a large Conservative Synagogue. . . ." Jeannette Resnik (Mrs. Nathan) has called our attention to the fact that Hebrew classes for the children were conducted by her late former husband, Morris W. Shoham, and were in fact held at the Home. Shoham also appears on pages 415 and 418. He served as principal of the Hebrew School at Temple Beth Israel in Providence and later as educational director of the Jewish Community of Woonsocket.

Page 418. Beryl Segal in his paper on "Jewish Schools and Teachers in Metropolitan Providence" describes the activities of Charles Miller as a Hebrew teacher in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Mr. Segal has submitted this addendum:

"Dorothy and Jack Miller of Paineville, Ohio, have called my attention to an omission in my paper on the "Jewish Schools and Teachers in Metropolitan Providence."

"According to the Millers there were in Rhode Island two other teachers named Miller, brothers of Charles Miller who taught at B'nai Israel in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. One was Noah Miller who taught in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, while the other, Louis Miller, taught in the Chester Avenue school in Providence.

"While I was preparing the paper I encountered nothing concerning them, their tenure in their respective schools, or former pupils. Dorothy, however, had been a pupil of Louis Miller. Noah Miller, apparently dissatisfied with the school in Pawtucket, became a farmer. That was in the early 1930s.

"The fact that three brothers Miller were engaged in teaching in the state is in itself interesting. However, only Charles Miller of Woonsocket left a lasting imprint on Jewish teaching in the area because of his many years in the same community."

Page 419. The footnote at the bottom of page 419, which reads “For more on this synagogue see page 410,” should read “For more on this synagogue see page 420.”

Page 436. This page was incorrectly numbered “336.”

Page 446. Rabbi Israel M. Goldman of Chizuk Amuno Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland writes: “In your Bibliographical Notes on page 446 you list my recent book (*Life-Long Learning Among Jews*). You state ‘while there are no references of Rhode Island interest.’ Under the general heading ‘Hevrot in America,’ I deal with the Hevrah Shash of Bnai Zim of Providence on pages 252 through 256. Also I deal with the Hevrah Mishnayot and Ein Yaakov of Synagogue Keshet Israel of Providence and this is found on pages 256 through 258 . . . the index to my book, unfortunately, does not contain any reference to Providence.”

INDEX TO VOLUME VII

- | | | | |
|--|-------|----------------|-------------|
| | No. 1 | November, 1975 | pp. 1-184 |
| | No. 2 | November, 1976 | pp. 185-336 |
| | No. 3 | November, 1977 | pp. 337-456 |
| | No. 4 | November, 1978 | pp. 457-584 |
-
- Abbell, Maxwell 146
 Abbott, Dorothy M. 2, 186, 338, 458
 Abel, Abraham L. 356, 357
 Abelson, Isadore 367-368
 Abisch, Aaron 196
 Abish, Jacob 251
 Abraham, Allen 257n
 Abrams, Z. 330
 Academy of Religion and Mental Health, Rhode Island Chapter 166
 Acculturation, early 20th century, in Providence 529-532
 Ackerman, Harold 356
 Ackerman, Isidore 357
 Ackerman's Delicatessen 246
 Addenda 455, 558-559
 Adelberg, Charles L., Mrs. 155, 160
 Adelman, Annie 237
 Adelman, David C. 31n, 42, 48, 72n, 87f, 153, 170n, 171, 292-293, 419n, 431n, 445, 461-462, 464n
 Adelman, David Charak, Annual Lecture 175, 327-328, 444-445, 547
 Adelman, Maurice, M.D. 455
 Adelson, Joseph, Mrs. (née Ruth Woolf) 234, 456
 Adelson, Max 73
 Adelson, Samuel, Dr. 73
 Adler, Cyrus 171
 Adler, Moritz 48
 Adler, Walter 341, 374, 384
 Advertisements, early, in Providence 462-469
 Agreement, Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association and Jewish Home for the Aged 159-160
 Ahavath Shalom Congregation, West Warwick 420-429
 Alexander, Cosmo front cover No. 3
 Alexander, Max 513, 514, 517, 520, 523-525, 526, 533
 Alexander, Nadia (Natalie) (Mrs. Max) 513, 523, 524-525
 Allen, Abraham 204
 Alper, Norman 358
 Altman, Samuel 227, 232-233, 239-240, 247, 253, 255n, 256n
America: History and Life, Rhode Island references in 448
American Jew, Colonial, The Rhode Island references in 446
American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen, The Rhode Island references in 446
 American Jewish Archives 456, 471, 549
American Jewish Experience, The, excerpts from Bicentennial celebration of Synagogue Council of America 448
American Jewish Historical Quarterly Rhode Island references in 448
 American Jewish Historical Society 171, 175, 430
 American Jewish Historical Society, early leadership in the 171
American Jewish Historical Society Collections, Rhode Island Materials in the 171-174
 American Jewish History, Museum of 258
 American-Jewish identity, formation of an, early 20th century, in Providence 532-533
American Jewish Landmarks, Rhode Island references in 447
 American Jewish Tercentenary Celebration Collection 174
American Jewish Year Book, Rhode Island references in 329, 446
 American Jews, early, paucity of direct descendants of 440
 American Revolution, the: as a civil war 259, 265; Bicentennial celebrations of 302-324; and Newport's Jews 258-276, 446
American Revolution, The Jews in the. Unrecognized Patriots, Newport references in 446
Americans of Jewish Descent. A Compendium of Genealogy 175, 446
 Angell, Louis D. 236
 Anhalt, Jack 357
 Anshei Shalom Association 420, 422
 Anthony, Joseph 30n
 Anti-Defamation League, Newport 74, 76
 Appleman, Samuel 354
 Arcade, the 462
 "Ariel" (pseudonym) writing in *Ezra* 434-435
 Army Training in Russia 119-120

- Arnold, James N. 31n
 Arnold, Samuel Greene 30n, 31n, 32n
 Ash, Rose 418
 Ash Street 250, 251
As I Remember It, autobiography by Benjamin Kane 255n
Auldersine, Chicago 523, 524
 Axelrod, A., Mrs. 503, 504
 A Z A 78
- Baden-Powell, Robert S. 341, 342
 Bafia, Jack 216
 Baghdadi, Mania Kleinburd 257n, 398n
 Bailey, Thomas A. 273n, 276n
 Baily Bros. 215
 Bailyn, Bernard 29n, 31n
 Bais Israel Anshoy Hestreich, Congregation (Congregation Bais Isruel Anshoy Hestrieich, "Robinson Street Shul", "Galizianer Shul") 221-224, 229, 455
 Baker, Judge 60, 61
 Baker, Zachary M. 549
 Bakst, Adolph 436n
 Bakst's Drug Stores 435
 Ball, Nathan 47, 56, 59, 61, 65, 72n, 75
 Bander, Arthur 352, 358
 Bander, Barnet 240, 251
 Bander, Bernard 239
 Bander, Samuel 215, 234
 Bander, Samuel, Mrs. 234
 Baratz, David, Mrs. (nee Hannah Gordon) 225-226, 257n, 504, 506, 509, 510, 511, 512
 Barber, Sigmund 47, 48, 50
 Barker, Shirley 325
 Baron, Salo 141, 146
 Barrengos, Herman, Mrs. (nee Rachel Semonoff) 257n
 Barron, Jerome J. 5
 Bartlett, John R. 30n, 31n
 Baruch, David, Reverend 43, 44, 56, 71n
 Baruch, Jonas 195
 Bassin, Michael 48, 49
 Bazar, Abraham 189, 198-199, 216, 222, 223, 239, 240, 245-246, 250, 251, 252
 Bazar, Maurice 210, 230, 232, 252, 255n, 257n
 Bazar's Bank 250, 252
 Bazar's Hall 210, 215, 232, 238, 239, 240, 245, 252
 Bazarsky's Meat Market 191
 Beacon Avenue School 230
 Becker, Charles 249
 Bedrick, Louis, Mr. and Mrs. 234
 Beiser, Edward N., Ph.D. 547
 Belais, Henry 48, 49
 Belilove, J., Mrs. 503, 504
 Belkin, Samuel 149-151
- Bellin, Frank 204
 Bellin, Harry 204
 Benjamin, Myer (or Benjamin Myers) 18, 26, 265, 270
 Benjamin, Rachel (or Mrs. Benjamin Myers) 270-271, 273
 Benjamin, Samuel 272
 Bennett, Joseph M., M.D. 235
 Ben Yosef (writing in *Ezra*) 433-434
 Berger, Albert C., Dr. 345, 355
 Berger, Ilie, D.M.D. 199, 204, 236, 238-239, 251, 252, 256n
 Berlinsky's Butcher Shop 247
 Berman, the butcher 206, 247
 Berman, Deborah Leah 430
 Berman, Harry 425
 Berman, Jack L. 231, 455
 Berman, Louis 231, 455
 Berman, Ruth (Mrs. Jack L.) 231, 455
 Berman's, L., Meat and Poultry Market 191
 Berman's Spa 231, 455
 Bernkopf, Mrs. David 152
 Bernstein, Lester 358
 Bernstein, Samuel, Meats 191
 Beth-El, Temple 144, 174E, 224, 291, 292, 351, 352, 356-358, 370, 380, 414-415, front cover No. 4, 522, 548, back cover No. 4
 Beth Israel, Temple 223, 343, 344
 Bezviner, Louis 191
 bibliographic material connected with *Some Remarks on the Fragility of Religious Freedom* 540
 Bibliographical Notes; references to Rhode Island Jews 178-179, 329-331, 446-449, 548-549
 Bicentennial celebrations 302-304, 307-311, 312-313, 314-317, 318-319, 320-324
Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus, Rhode Island references in 329
 Bicentennial issue, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 4
 Bicentennial letter from the six colonial congregations 302, back cover No. 2
 Bicentennial symbol, Rhode Island back cover, No. 1
 Bicentennial visit to White House 302-304, 314
 Bigelow, Bruce 13, 16, 21, 23, 25, 29n, 30n, 31n
 Bilgray, Albert T., Rabbi 415
 Bilsky, Jacob, Mrs. 160
 Bilsky, Rose, 511, 512
 Blackman, Alden, M.D. 380, 450
 Blackman, Louis 357
 Blackstone Street 196, 216-217, 228, 236, 249, 251
 Blaustein, David, Dr. 412, 413, 435

- Bliss, Maynard 344
 Bloom, Abraham 216-217, 222, 257n, 357
 Bloom, Bessie Edith 230
 Bloom, butcher, the 247
 Bloom, Esther Sydney (Mrs. Manuel) 503, 504, 506, 509, 510, 511, 512
 Bloom, Julius 357
 Bloom, Manuel 364
 Bloom, William 204, 222
 Bloom, William, Mrs. 225
 B'nai B'rith, Haggai Lodge 355
 B'nai B'rith, Independent Order of 73-78
 B'nai B'rith Women, Roger Williams Chapter No. 181 448
 B'nai B'rith Youth Organization 78
 B'nai Israel 174, 558
 B'nai Yaacov Shul 416
 B'nai Zion Synagogue 150, 416-417, 419, 423
 Bochay, Henry 240
 Bochkas, H. (Botchkad, Botchkass) 149, 150, 239
 Bohnen, Eli A., Rabbi 2, 167, 186, 338, 365
 Bolles, Norman T. 175
 Book review: *Strange Wives* 325-326
 Bor, Samuel 77
 Boraisha, Menachem 409n
 Bornstein, Louis 357
 Bornstein, Sarah 244
 Borod, Samuel 203, 232
 Boston Jewish Orphan Asylum 391
 Botchkad, Harry (Bochkas, Botchkass) 149, 150, 239
 "Botchkass, Mr." (Bochkas, Botchkad) 149, 150, 239
 Botvin, A. L. 204, 208, 209
 Botvin, Fannie (Mrs. Abraham) 208
 Botvin, Max 209
 Botvin, Morris 209
 Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island 341-384
 (For names of persons connected with the Jewish Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island, see general alphabetical listing.)
Boy Scout Story, The 383n; Boy Scout Symphony Orchestra 357-358; Boy Scouts of America 341; Cub Scout movement 370-372; Eagle Patrol 356; Eagle Scouts 373-374; Explorers' program 372-373, 375, 380-381; Flying Eagle, boy scout patrol 344; *Greater Providence Council* 342; Jewish Committee on Scouting 375; Memorial Services 360-364; Narragansett Council of Boy Scouts 373, 374, 376, 377; Narragansett Patrol 356; Ner Tamid medal 367; Panther, boy scout patrol 344; Program, Scout Night, Troop 5 352; Providence Council, Greater 342; "Providence Troop, First, The" 359-360; Radio and scouting 348-351; Religion and boy scouting 364-370; Rhode Island Hospital and scouting 348-350, 372; Scout awards 373-377; Scout Sabbath, the annual 377-378; scout unit, Rhode Island Training School 378; "Scouting, Ten Years of" 383n Shofar Award 377-378; Silver Beaver Award 374; "Three Faith Worship Center" 365-367; "Troop, First Providence, The" 359-360; Troop 1 359-360; Troop 5 347-353, 355, 360, 363, 364; Troop 10 342-347, 355, 363, 364, 368, 370; Troop 14 359, 364, 368, 376; Troop 20 358-359, 364, 370; Troop 28 364; Troop 40 370, 375, 376, 380; Troop 41 353-356, 364, 368; Troop 50 355, 356-358, 370, 376; Wolf, The, boy scout patrol 344
 Boy Scouts, Jewish 341-384
 (See *Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island*)
 Boyce, William D. 341, 342
 Boyle, Mayor 62
 Boyman, Alter 238, 252-253, 283, 292, 435
 Boyman, Sara (Mrs. Alter) 252-253, 283
 Bradner, Lester 225, 255n
 Brainson, A.P.L. 352
 Braude, Joel Isaac 144, 146-148
 Braude, Michael 146
 Braude, Rita (Mrs. Joel Isaac) 147, 148
 Braude, William G., Rabbi 2, 140-148, 149, 186, 291-292, 338, 339, 365, 414-415, 432
 Braude, Yosef Zvi 148
 Brauer, George 413
 Break-in at Touro Synagogue 42-72
 Bremner, Robert 398n
 Brett, Roger 447
 Bridenbaugh, Carl 29n, 31n, 276n
 Brier, Benjamin 203, 204, 215, 227-228, 252, 255n, 257n
 Brier, Charles 203
 Brier, Harry 203
 Brier, Sarah (Mrs. Benjamin) 203, 255n, 257n
 Brier, Stanley J. 374, 376
 Brill, Bertha 514, 517, 519, 520, 521, 527, 529-530, 532, 533
 British occupation of Newport 25, 26, 27
 Broches, S. 29n, 30n, 31n
 Bromberg, Nathan 356
 Bromson, Meyer 155
 Bronkow, Robert I. 448
 Brooke, Emerson 371
 Brophy, Joseph 196

- Brotherhood*, Rhode Island references in 330
- Brown, Arthur L., Judge 68-69
- Brown, Charles C., Mrs. (née Fannie Grant) 208, 215, 226, 232, 241-244, 249, 255n, 256n, 257n
- Brown, David 261
- Brown, John Nicholas, Award 177
- Brown, M., Mrs. 503, 504
- Brown, Nicholas 20
- Brown, Obadiah 19
- Brown, Russell 358
- Brown, T. Dawson 365
- Brown, Udetta D. 447
- Brown University 400, 401
- Browns of Providence, the 27, 28
- Buckler, Ida (Mrs. Barney) 162, 164
- Bucklin, George, Captain 365, 374
- Bucklin, Harold, Professor 393
- Bund, the 516, 525, 530-531
- Burdick, Clark 65
- Bureau of Jewish Education 415-416, 419
- Burke, John C. 42, 43, 57-72
- Burnaby, Andrew, Reverend 33, 33n, 172
- Burrows, Millar, Professor 140
- Businesses in South Providence 241-251
- Buxton, G. Edward, Jr. 342, 365
- Cahoone, Sarah S. 172
- Camp Yawgoog 345, 359, 365, 367, 368, 369, 370, 374, 375, 378-379, 380, 382
- Campanell, Mordecai 178
- Captain Ivanov 138-139
- Cardozo, Moses 13
- Carigal (Karigal), Raphael Haim Isaac, Rabbi 178, 179, 330, 331
- Carleton Papers—British Military Headquarters Papers 442-443
- Cemetery, Jewish, Newport 43, 46, 173, 174, 177, 323, 326f, 549
- Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard 148
- Cerel, Jack A., Mrs. 160
- Chaiken, Nathan 357
- Chalkstone Avenue c. 1903 front cover No. 2, 447, 455; c. 1905 301
- Champlin, Christopher 14, 17, 26, 28
- Charitable organization, first chartered women's 153
- Charitable organizations, beginnings of, in Providence 239-241
- Charles Street, lower, c. 1895 300-301
- Charter members, Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association 155
- Chartier, Louis 545
- Chase, Morton 59, 65
- Chesed Shel Emeth 241
- Chester Avenue School 216, 230
- Chester Avenue Talmud Torah 232, 414, 416
- Chevrah Beth Yisroel Anshe Austria 221-224
- Chiel, Arthur A., Rabbi 297
- Children and Youth in America* 398n
- Chill, Abraham, Rabbi 292, 416
- Chizuk Amuno Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland 559
- Chorney, Sophie (Mrs. Joseph) 158, 160
- Chyet, Stanley F. 29n, 30n, 31n, 261, 263, 265, 271, 273n, 274n, 275n, 276n, 327, 331
- City Hall Hardware 249
- Civil War, Jews in the, from Rhode Island 446
- Classical High School, South Providence Jews and 230
- Cobe, Walter M. 356
- Cohen, Al 357
- Cohen, Albert 357
- Cohen, Albert, Mrs. 155, 168, 170n
- Cohen, Augusta, Mrs. 155
- Cohen, Barney 77
- Cohen, Benjamin G. 240
- Cohen, Bernard 357
- Cohen, David 357
- Cohen, Dorothy (Mrs. Moe) (Cohn) 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 170n
- Cohen, Jake 240
- Cohen, Jerome 358
- Cohen, Leo, M.D. 235
- Cohen, Nachman, Rabbi 417
- Cohn, Albert 354, 357
- Cohn, Albert, Mr. & Mrs. 354, 357
- Cohn, Dorothy, (Mrs. Moe) (Cohen) 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 170n
- Cohn, Edward L., Rabbi 303-304, back cover No. 2
- Coleman, Edward 171
- Collins, Clarkson V., III 461
- Collins, Henry 14
- Collins and Rivera 19
- Colonial Hall 212, 215
- Colonial Jewish communities, the six 302, back cover No. 2
- Colonial Jewish congregations, the, a bi-centennial letter from the Rabbis of 302, back cover No. 2
- Colonial Rhode Island*, Jewish references in 330
- Commandant 115-117
- Community Center, Jewish, Newport 75
- "Community and the Providence Jew in the Early Twentieth Century" 398n
- Community Voice* 456
- Comstock, Anna Botsford 288-289
- Comstock, John Henry 288-289
- Congregation Adat Jeshurun em Anshe Lubtz (Eldridge Street Synagogue, New York) 430

- Congregation Ahavath Shalom, crown for Torah Scroll back cover No. 3
 Congregation Ahavath Shalom, West Warwick 419, 420-429
 Congregation Ahavath Shalom 418, 419
 Congregation Bais Isruel Anshoy Hestreich (Congregation Bais Israel Anshoy Hestreich, "Robinson Street Shul", "Galizianer Shul") 221-224, 229, 455
 Congregation B'nai Jacob, Connecticut 297f
 Congregation Jeshuat Israel 43, 46-72, 73, 173, 260, 302, 305, 318
 Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah 302
 Congregation, Mikve Israel, Philadelphia 302
 Congregation Ohave Shalom 416
 Congregation Shaare Zedek 224, front cover No. 4
 Congregation Sons of Abraham 292, 416
 Congregation Sons of David 411
 Congregation Sons of Israel 411
 Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David 174f, 218, 224, 293, 363, 410, 411, 412, 414-415, 419n, front cover No. 4
 Congregation, Sons of Zion 167, 413, 430
 Congregation, Touro, the 47, 48-69
 Conley, Patrick T., Ph.D. 344-345
 Conn, Jacob J. ("Jake") 447
 Conn, Morris 359
 Connecticut Jewish Ledger 297f
 "Continental Association" 25
Convention of Jewish Societies for Promoting Physical Culture Among the Jewish Masses 172
 Coren, Baruch (Corn) 48, 50
 Correa, Emanuel Alvares 13
 Corrigenda 455
 Cort, Sophie R., Mrs. 448
 Cossacks, Don, the 110-114
 Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds Records 174
 Council of Jewish Women, National 167, 245, 447
 Courtship practices, early 20th century, in Providence 526-529
 "Cousin Sadie" in *Sabbath Visitor* 297-299
 Crabb, Benjamin 19
 Crafts, Ebenezer 37, 38-40
 Cranch, Richard 19
 Cranston Jewish Community Center, women's division 163
 Crary, Catherine 274n, 276n
 Crepeau, Henry J. 398n
 Cromelin, Daniel, and Sons 264
 Cruger, Henry 21-22, 24, 330
 Cutler Comb Company 251f
 Cutler, Colonel Harry, Post No. 3 360, 362-364
 Cutler, Harry, Colonel 237, 251, 360, 362-363, 548
 Cutler, Harry, Mrs. 152
 Cutler, Jennie 237
 Cutler Jewelry Company 251
 Dalberg, Mrs. 241
 Dannin, Charles 48, 49
 Dannin, Chone 62
 Dannin, Fanny 72n
 Dannin, John J. 72n, 77
 Dannin, Joseph 48, 50, 65, 77
 Dannin, Louis 48, 50
 Dannin, Nathan (Nettin) 48, 49, 62
 Dannin, Robert M. 75
 Dannin, William 75, 76
 "David, et al vs. Levy et al." 65
 David, Fischel 50, 53, 56-62, 65, 72n
 David, Israel 53, 65
 David, Moses 53, 65
 David, Nathan 53, 65, 73
 David Yellin Teachers Seminary 415
 Davidson, E. and L. 46
 Davis, Bessie, Mrs. 155
 Davis, Fannie, Mrs. 155
 Davis, Jacob 37, 38-40
 Deacon, Charles F. 236
 Declaration of Independence and the break with Great Britain 265
 Dedication of Touro Synagogue 259, 261, 541
 DeFunis, Marco, the case of 7-11
 Deinard, Ephraim, Collection of Hebraica 140
 Deitch, William 425
 Delicatessen, N.Y., and Public Model Creamery 191
 De Maza, David (De Meza) 48, 49
 De Meza, David (De Maza) 48, 49
 Diwinsky, Jacob 191
 Diwinsky, Louis 191
 Diwinsky's delicatessen store 191, 246
 Dlutny, E., Mrs. 503, 504
 Doctor, early Jewish, in Providence 235, 256n, 294-296
 Dolberg, Amelia, Mrs. 234, 237, 243
 Donnelly, Humphrey J., III, Mayor 541
 Douglas, W. W., Judge 49, 65-67
 Dreifuss, Stanley H., Rabbi 77
 Dressler, Joseph 420, 425
 Dubv's Grove 205, 206
 Dudley Street 196, 200, 201, 202, 245, 251
 Dugan, Officer 59, 61, 66
 Dyer, John F. 467, 468, 469
 Eagle Printing Company 423, 424
 East European emigration, reasons for, early 20th century 193

- East Greenwich Academy, Jewish students in 446
 Easton, Officer 66
 Eaton, Jacob A. 237-238
Education, The, of an Immigrant 277-293
 Educational Alliance, New York 515, 522
 Effros, Morris 300
 Egnal, Freda 31n
 Ehrenkrantz, the mover 206
 Ehrlich, Abraham 352
 Einhorn, David, Rabbi 321, 322-323
 Einstein, Arthur 285
 Einstein, Arthur, Mrs. (Essie) 447
 Einstein, Moses, Mrs. 152
 Eisenberg, Charles 354
 Eisenberg, Irving 74, 77
 Eisendrath, Maurice V., Rabbi 145
 Elias, Albert J. 48, 49
 Eliash, Lea 416
 Elizer, Isaac 15, 16, 21, 23, 26, 28, 260, 261, 262, 265, 548
 Ellery, William 26, 31n
 Elman, Milton 239
 Elman, Moshele 229
 Emmanu-El, Temple 178, 358, 370, 388, 415, 446
 Endeavors, the 210
 Engel, Julius (Engell, Engle) 46, 48, 49, 50, 54, 70-71
 Engell, Julius (Engel, Engle) 46, 48, 49, 50, 54, 70-71
 Engle, Julius (Engel, Engell) 46, 48, 49, 50, 54, 70-71
 English High School, South Providence Jews and 230
 Epstein, Henni Wenkart 146
 Epstein, Joseph 430
 Errata, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 179, 455-456, 558-559
 Ethnic Heritage Studies project, Rhode Island College 456
 Ettleman, David 236
Event, The, is With the Lord, Rhode Island reference in 331
Ezra—A Journal of Opinion 339, 432
 Ezra, Order of 432-433
- Fabricant, Louis 73
 Fain, Irving I. 511
 Fain, Irving Jay 146
 Falcone, Erminio 301
 Falkow, Jack 77
 Family Circle, The, Newport 73
 "Family, The, as a Haven in a Heartless World" 399n
 Fanning, Richard 400n
 Fay's orchestra 215
 Federation, Jewish, of Rhode Island 4
 Fein, Isaac M. 179
 Feinberg, I., Mrs. 503, 504
 Feiner, Louis, Mrs. 155, 503, 504
 Feingold, Harry 357
 Felder, Jacob I. 157-159, 509, 511
 Feldman, Isadore, Mrs. 503, 504, 509
 Feldman, M., Mrs. 155
 Feldman, Theresa, Mrs. 234
 Fellman, Herbert, Mrs. 162, 164
 Fershtman, Max, M.D. 167
 Festival Committee for State Institutions of Rhode Island 160-170
 Field, Bradford H. 342, 353, 355
 Field, Joseph, Mrs. (née Anna Zeller-mayer) 222, 255n, 256n, 257n
 "50 Years in South Providence" 232-233
 Finesilver, Moses Ziskind, Rabbi 430, 431
 Finkelstein, Bessie, Mrs. 155
 Finkelstein, Joseph Manassch 148
 Finkelstein, Moses 155
 Finkle, Philip 344
 Finklestein, M., Mrs. 503, 504
 Fischman, Carl 195
 Fish, Boris B. 160
 Fishbein, Louis 168
 Fishbein, Ralph H., 167, 345, 356
 Fishbein, Sarah (Mrs. Louis) 168
 Fisher, Barnett 77
 Fishman, Abraham P., M.D. 235
 Fishman, Louis 247
 Fishman, Nathan 203, 207, 217, 248, 251, 256n, 257n
 Fishman, Priscilla 178
 Fishtein, Harry 420
 Flanagan, William F., Brig. General 362, 363
 Fleisig, Norbert 232, 251
 Ford, Gerald, President 302-304, 314, 317
Foster Care, Thirty Years of Innovation in 399n
 Foster Papers 31n
Foward 230, 231
 Fowler, Henry Thatcher 150
 Fowler, William M., Jr. 31n
 Fox, C. Joseph 354
 Fox, Maurice 358
 Frank, David 420, 422, 423
 Frank, David, Mrs. inside back cover No. 3
 Franks, David 258
 Frant, David, 47, 48, 49, 65, 70-71
 Franz Joseph, Kaiser 108
 Free Hebrew School 413-414
 Freimann, Aaron 436n
 French and Indian War 14, 15, 262
 Frero, Carlo 66
 Freund, Miriam 32n
 Fried, Marcus 195
 Friedenwald, Herbert 275n, 276n
 Friedman, Bernard C., Mrs. 176
 Friedman, Lee M. 274n, 276n

- Friedman, Nathan H. 74
 Friedman, Samuel 175, 176, 544
 Frucht, Anna 514, 516-517, 519, 520, 522-523, 524, 526, 527, 533
 Funds, endowment, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association 546
 Futtersak, David 425f
 Futtersak, Marvin 425f, 429
- Gabrilowitz, scribe 423
 Gainer, Joseph H., Mayor 179, 360
 Galicia, Jews of 113-114, 133
 "Galizianer Shul" 455
 Galkin, Herman 341-342, 344, 345, 346, 347-353, 353-356, 357, 358, 360, 362, 363, 364, 367-369, 370-371, 377-379, 383n, 384, 400n
 Galkin, Joseph 350, 351, 352, 353, 357, 398n, 400
 Ganzer, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Garnett, Captain 60, 66
 Garrahy, J. Joseph, Governor 377-378
 Gay Street 191, 196, 199, 202, 207, 217, 231, 239, 245, 246, 247, 249, 251
 Geffner, Albert 343, 345, 346, 347, 358
 Geller, Marvin 429
 Gemilath Chesed, South Providence 206, 218, 239
Genealogy, A Compendium of Americans of Jewish Descent 446
 General Jewish Committee 172, 512
 George Washington Letter Ceremonies 5, 5f, 9-10, 339, 437-439, 440f, 534f
 Gerber, Isaac, M.D. 294f
 Gereboff, Mayer 413
 Gershkoff, Edward 353
 Gershkoff, Joseph 352
 Gerstein, Louis C., Rabbi 303, 304, back cover No. 2
 Gertsacov, Edward 347
 Gertz, Mitchell 352
 Gifford, Hugh, Deputy Sheriff 50, 66
 Gillman, Daniel 357
 Gillson, Samuel, Mrs. 176
 Gilman, David 357
 Ginsberg, B., Mrs. 503, 504
 Ginsberg, Lewis 44, 72n
 Ginzberg, Louis 142
 Glantz, Benjamin, Mrs. 160
 Glantz, one 420, 422
 Glickman, Nathan 248
 Goddard, Albert 48, 49
 Goffman, Erving 390, 398n
 Gold, J., Mrs. 503, 504
 Gold, Michael 249
 Goldberg, Arthur 79
 Goldberg, Bertha, Miss 215
 Goldberg, Herbert L. 166, 167
 Goldberg, Joel 77
 Goldberg, Laura, Miss 215
 Goldberg, Lillian, Miss 215
 Goldberg, Philip 77
 Goldberg, Sarah, Miss 215
 Goldenberg, Carl 357
 Goldenberg, Earle 346
 Goldenberg, Jonas, Mrs. 257n
 Goldenberg, Louis 205, 223, 239
 Goldenberg, Mr. 455
 Goldenberg, Samuel 249
 Goldman, Israel M., Rabbi 358, 365, 415, 446, 559
 Goldman, Samuel 73, 74, 75
 Goldowsky, Bernard, Mr. & Mrs. 354
 Goldowsky, Seebert J., M.D. 2, 32n, 170n, 175, 176, 178, 235, 242, 327, 329, 338, 339, 341, 359, 360, 383n, 384, 398n, 399n, 436n, 446, 458, 461, 541, 544, 546, 548
 Goldowsky, Seebert J., Mrs. 2, 176, 186, 327, 328, 338, 444, 445, 458, 546, 547
 Goldscheider, Calvin 172, 409n
 Goldsmith, Maurice 342
 Goldsmith, Relia 412
 Goldsmith, scout 358
 Goldstein, Abraham 353 359
 Goldstein, Alice 339, 401
 Goldstein, Chaya (Mrs. Jack Lapin) 528-529
 Goldstein, Lillian Potter 2, 186
 Goldstein, Philip 300
 Goldstein, Sidney 344
 Goldstein, Sidney, Ph.D. 2, 172, 186, 338, 339, 401, 409n, 458
 Goldstein, Sidney S., M.D. 166-167, 170n
 Goldstein, Terry 170
 Goldstein and Goldscheider 407, 409n
 Golemba's Morris, grocery store 191, 202, 246
 Gomberg, Charles A. 354
 Gomberg, Max B., M.D. 341, 342, 352, 367, 412
 Gomberg, Mrs. 435
 Goodman, Percival 331
 Gordon, Beryl (Bernard) 204, 246
 Gordon, Jacob 352
 Gordon, James I., Rabbi 417
 Gordon, R. 344
 Gordon, Ruth 225-226
 Gordon, Samuel 196
 Goren, Arthur A. 398n
 Gorman, Samuel 357
 Gottfried, Johann 425
 Gottlieb, Rose, Mrs. 160
 Granowsky, Abraham 196
 Granowsky, Louis 196
 Granowsky, M. D., Miss 196
 Grant, Joseph 467
 Grant, Louis M. 197, 204, 232, 236, 239, 240, 241, 249, 251, 252

- Grant, Mary (Mrs. Louis) 197, 204, 226, 232, 234, 236, 237, 241, 249, 252
 Grant, Max 232, 249
 Grant Supply Co. 232f
 Gratz Family Papers, material relating to Rhode Island in the 173
 Gratz, Michael 258, 263, 271
 Gray, Mildred 160
 Grayzel, Solomon 276n
 Greenberg, Leo, Mrs. 164
 Greenberg, Miriam (Mrs. Selig) 436n
 Greenberg, Sam 249
 Greenblatt, Simon 239
 Gross, Fania 415, 416
 Grossman, the Leo, family 146
 Grover, S.K., Mrs. 152
 Guedalia, Moses, Rabbi 47
 Gumpertz, Sydney G., Captain 549
 Guny, Elizabeth 398n, 399n, 400n
 Gurland, Jerome, Rabbi 144, 167
 Gutstein, Morris A. 30n, 32n, 52, 71n, 72n, 75, 259, 265, 273n, 274n, 276n
- Hadfield, Joseph 26-27, 32n
 Hahn, J. Jerome 204
 Haidamaks 137-139
 Halpern, Rose Botvin 209
 Hambly, Charles A., Jr., Mayor 77
 Handler, Jacob, Rabbi 166, 167
 Hanopolsky, Mark 418
 Harkness, R. E. E., Ph.D. 172
 Harris, William I., M.D. 294
 Harrison, Peter 33
 Harry's Fruit Market 191
 Harry's (Kosher) Delicatessen 447
 Hart, Abraham 12, 13, 26
 Hart, Benjamin 12, 16, 26, 265
 Hart, Isaac 12, 16, 23, 26, 68, 173, 258, 260, 262, 265, 266-268, 268-269, 273, 330, 446
 Hart, Jacob 12, 16, 26, 265, 268
 Hart, Joshua 268-269
 Hart, Moses 268-269
 Hart, Naphtali 12, 16, 19, 20, 23, 26, 260, 262, 268, 330
 Hart, Naphtali, Jr. 260
 Hart, Nathan 262, 268-269
 Hart, Samuel 178, 268-269
 Hart, Samuel, Jr. 269
 Hartman, Bernard 240
 Hayley and Hopkins 24
 Hayman, Samuel 300
 Hays, Judah 15, 266
 Hays, Moses Michael 15, 16, 22-23, 26, 179, 260, 265, 266-267, 269, 270, 273, 542
 Hays and Polock 22, 30n
 Headley, Madge 447
Heart of the People, The, Rhode Island references in 330
- Hebrew Benevolent and Orphanage Society of New York 395, 398n, 400n
 Hebrew Congregation at Newport 5, 33, 42-72, back cover No. 1, 305-306, 437
 Hebrew Day School, first 416
 Hebrew Day School, Providence 144
 Hebrew Educational Institute 347, 348, 351, 367, 368, 370-371, 418-419
 Hebrew Free Loan Association, Ladies' 501-512
 (For names of persons connected with the Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association, see general alphabetical listing.)
 annual luncheons 507, 508, 509;
 charter members 502, 503, 504; "Fifth Jubilee Loyalty Luncheon" 507; final meeting, June 20, 1965 511; Hebrew Free Loan Association 501; *Jewish Woman, The, Liberated* 501; Liberty Printing 506; loan application form 505; Zinn's restaurant 506, 507
 Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society 514
 Hebrew Ladies Auxilliary, West Warwick 420, 429
 Hebrew Literary and Dramatic Club 233
 Hebrew Orphan Asylum 242, 244, 385-400, 433
 Hebrew Philomathian Association 210f
 Hebrew Union Aid Association, Ladies 153-170, 506, 509, 512
 Hebrew Union College 140
 Hedges, James B. 29n, 30n, 31n, 32n
 Helfner, Francine Gail 177
 Heller, Charles 48
 Heller, Jacob 48, 49-50
 Hellman, Max 249
 Hellman, Rose (Mrs. David) 257n
 Helman, Marcus 195
 Henry, Edward P. 167
 Henry Friedman Lodge No. 899, B'nai B'rith 73
 "Heritage, The Nineteenth Century: Family, Feminism and Sex, The" 399n
 Hess, Everett 75
 Hess, L. and H. 46
 Hewes, Josiah 41n
 Hillel 11, 74
 Hillel, Judah 28
 Hillman, Archibald M. 74
 Hillquit, Morris 418
 Hirsch, E., Mrs. 503, 504
 Hirshfield, Barney 420, 422
 Hochberg, Gertrude (Mrs. Robert) 384
 Hochberg, Mark, M.D. 380-381
 Hochberg, Robert 372, 384
 Hochman, Isaac 249
 Hoffman, Melvin D., M.D. 369, 372-373, 374, 375-376, 380, 381, 383n, 384

- Holland, Leonard, Major General 374, 376, 384
 Home for Aged Men and Aged Couples 159
 Hopkirk, Howard W. 398n, 399n
 Hornstein, Fannie 243
 Horowitz, Dave 228
 Horowitz, Milton 223, 255n, 257n
 Horowitz, Nathan 204, 222, 223, 232
 Horowitz, Samuel 62
 Horvitz, Abraham, Mrs. (née Eleanor Feldman) 2, 152, 186, 187, 189, 338, 339, 341, 398n, 400n, 444, 456, 458, 501, 546
 Horvitz, J., Mrs. 503, 504
 Horvitz, Jacob, Mrs. (née Fannie Krasnow) 192, 232, 255n, 257n
 Horwitz, Bessie 242
 Horwitz, Manuel, M.D. 380
 Horwitz, Nuchyn 195
 Horwitz, Samuel 195
Houses, The, of Providence 447
 Howe, Julia Ward 6
 Hughes, Charles Evans, Chief Justice 172
 Huhner, Leon 274n, 276n
 Hunt's Mills 210
 Hust, Hungary 132-134
 Hyman, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Hyman, Samuel 64
 Hyman, William 358
- Ihlder, John 447
Immigrant, The Education of an 277-293
 Immigration, Jewish, to Rhode Island 445, 548
 Immigration, 19th and 20th century 441
 Immigration, Russian and Polish 447
 Impressment for work in Russia 115-117
 Incorporators, South Providence Business Men's Association 251
 Independent Order of Brith Sholom 241
 Independent Savings Association of South Providence 240
 Ingall, Michael A., Mrs. 338, 458
Institutions Serving Children, (New York, 1944) 398n
 "Irresistibles" group 435
 Isaacks, Jacob (Isaacs) 26, 28, 260, 261, 262, 265, 271
 Isaacks, Joshua 15
 Isaacks, Moses 15, 26
 Isaacs, Abraham 272
 Izenstein, Charles 356
- Jackson, William, Major 305, 306
 Jacob, Abram 195
 Jacob, Joseph 15
 Jacobs, Abraham, family 195
 Jacobs, Isaac 272
 "Jacobs, James & Co., dry goods" 462
 Jacobs, James, early Jewish merchant, Providence 461-470
 Jacobs, Murray 74
 Jacobs, Sadie 195, 197, 218, 233, 244, 256n, 257n
 Jacobs, Samuel 466-467, 468, 470
 Jacobson, Jacob Mark 32n
 Jacobson, Joseph 365
 Jagolinzer, Fishel 204, 249
 Jagolinzer, Joseph 189, 201, 202, 217, 228, 232, 236, 239, 246, 248, 249, 253n, 256n, 257n
 James, Sydney V. 330
 Jefferson, Thomas, and religious freedom 535, 536-537
 Jersky, Lea, Mrs. 155
 Jeshuat Israel, Congregation 43, 46-72, 73, 173, 260, 302, 305, 318, 541f, 544, 548, 549
 Jew in America, Contributions of the 448
Jew, The, and the American Revolution Rhode Island references in 330
 Jew, The, in Norwich, Connecticut 79-103 (See Norwich, Connecticut, the Jews of)
Jew, A, in the Russian Army During World War I 104-139
 Jewett's Creamery 191
Jewish Americans, Three Generations in a Jewish Community 172-173, 409n
 Jewish Cemetery, Newport 43, 46, 173, 174, 177, 323, 326f, 549
 Jewish charitable organization, first, in Providence 152
 Jewish Community Center, Newport 75, 175
 Jewish Community, the founding of a, Ahavath Shalom, West Warwick 420-429
 Jewish community in Newport, the rise and decline of the 12-32
Jewish Descent, Americans of. A Compendium of Genealogy 446
 Jewish districts, Providence, overcrowding in 447
 Jewish Ethnic Heritage Subcommittee 543, 544
 Jewish Family and Children's Service 166, 168
 Jewish Federation of Rhode Island 4, 176, 456
 Jewish genealogy. *Finding Our Fathers* 449
Jewish Genealogy, The Journal of, Toledot 549
Jewish History, Local, and Genealogy: The Rhode Island Experience 549

- Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island 153, 154, 156, 157, 164, 168, 169, 170n, 222, 509, 512, 513, 522, 524, 533
- Jewish landmarks, Rhode Island
American 447, New York 548
- Jewish Landmarks of New York*, Rhode Island references in 548
- Jewish merchant, early, of Providence 461-470
- Jewish merchants, early, of Newport 12-32, 175, 260-273
- Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island 242, 243, 348, 353-356, 368, 385-400, 522, 558
- Jewish Perceptions of America: From Melting Pot to Mosaic*, Rhode Island references in 329
- Jewish Publication Society of America 446
Jewish Review 344, 360
- Jewish Schools in Metropolitan Providence 410-419
- Jewish Social Club, 1761 260, 273n, 275n
- Jewish students, East Greenwich Academy, 1932 446
- Jewish Studies. Center for, Harvard University 148
- Jewish studies, chairs for 141, 146
- "Jewish Synagogue, In the, in Newport" inside back cover No. 1
- Jewish War Heroes 549
- Jewish Woman, the Rhode Island 152-170, 398n
- Jewish Women, National Council of 167, 245, 447
- Jews and the Boy Scout Movement 341-384
(See Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island.)
- Jews of Colonial Newport, The* 12-32, 175, 177, 258-276
- Jews in Leicester, Massachusetts, the 25, 26, 34-41, 271-272
- Jews and Liberals: Bakke and the Nazis in Skokie, Illinois* 547
- "Jews in Medicine" 383n
- Jews in Nineteenth Century America* 327-328
- Jews, The, in Norwich, Connecticut* 79-103
(See *Norwich, Connecticut, The Jews in*)
- Jews, the, of Orinin, Russia 105-122
- Jews, Rhode Island, references to 178-179, 329-331, 446-449, 548-549
- Jews of South Providence, the 189-257, 548
- Jews' Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, The* 33, 42-72
- "Jewtown" 300-301, 455
- Joffe, Carole 400n
- J O R 1 386-400, 558
- Joselit, Jenna Weissman 549
- Josephson, Israel J. 46, 48, 50, 65, 70-71
- Josephson, Joseph 50
- Jubilee anniversary, Synagogue Council of America 307-311
- Judah, Jacob 12
- Judah Touro Lodge No. 998, B'nai B'rith 73-78
- Judah Touro Lodge No. 998 Scholarship 77
- Judah Touro school 417
- Junior Aiders, Hebrew Orphan Asylum 244
- Jurmann, Ruth 511, 512
- Kabalkin, Samuel, Mrs. 160
- Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston, South Carolina 330
- Kahn, Norman, Dr. 370, 384
- Kahnfsky, Rose, Mrs. (Karnfsky) 160, 162
- Kamenets-Podolsk 106, 109, 113, 115, 117, 118, 131, 135-136, 138-139
- Kanan, Ottenberg and 447
- Kane, Benjamin 204, 235, 236, 251, 255n
- Kane, Benjamin, Mrs. (Esther) 235, 236
- Kane, Sidney 347
- Kane's Drug Store 235
- Kaplan, Jake 168
- Kaplan, Marilyn (Mrs. Stephen R.) 12, 274n, 276n, 338, 458
- Kaplan, Stephen R., M.D. 176
- Karigal (Carigal), Raphael Haim Isaac, Rabbi 178, 179, 330, 331
- Karnofsky, Rose, Mrs. (Kahnfsky) 160, 162
- Karpeles, Leopold 549
- Karp, Abraham J. 178-179, 329
- Katz, George 398n, 399n, 400n
- Katz-Hyman, Martha B. 339, 430
- Katz, Julius 247
- Katz, Label 77
- Katz, Molly 447
- Kaufman, Jacob 205, 251, 455
- Kehillah Experiment, The. New York Jews and the Quest for Community:* 398n
- Keller, Cantor 419, 423
- Keller, Feifdee 222
- Keller's Meat Market 191
- Kellner, George H., Professor 456
- Kelman, David 204
- Kelman, Fred 370, 384
- Kennedy, David 399n
- Kennedy, John F., President 319
- Kennison, Samuel I., M.D. 361, 362, 363, 364
- Kestenman brothers 200

- Kiev 135, 137
 Kimball, Gertrude Selwyn 33n
 Kimball, Governor 62
 Kimeldorf, Louis 248
Kinder Journal 290
Kinder Zeitung 290
 King George's War (1744-1748) 13
 Kirk, William 225, 255n, 256n
 Kirschenbaum, Isidore 357
 Kirwin's Beach 217
 Klausner, Isaac 415
 Klein, Aaron, Mr. and Mrs. 415-416
Know Your Community 330
 Kofoff, Reuben 392
 Kohler, Max J. 32n, 171, 173, 174, 276n
 Kohn, M. L. 400n
 Kohut, George 171
 Kominsky, Mary 237
 Koppelman, scout 358
 Koppman, Lionel 447, 548, 549
 Korn, Bertram Wallace 329, 330
 Korn, David 195, 201, 228, 250, 255n
 Korn, Lewis 203, 257n
 Korn, Louis 417
 Korn, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Kosch, Morton 77
 Kosch, Samuel 73, 74, 77
 Krakowitz, one 356
 Kramer, Louis 355, 356
 Krasnow, Celia 192
 Krasnow, David 192, 204
 Krasnow, Etta 192
 Krasnow family 192, 193-194, 203
 Krasnow, Fannie (Mrs. Jacob Horvitz) 192, 232, 255n
 Krasnow, Harry 192, 204, 216, 247, 255n, 257n
 Krasnow, Jacob 192, 204, 246-247
 Krasnow, Miriam 192
 Krasnow, Rose (Mrs. David) 255n, 257n
 Krasnow, Ruth (Mrs. Harry) 257n
 Kravetz, Meyer 65
 Krieger, Seymour 415
 Kushner, Aid 331
 Kusnitz, Bernard 42, 73, 75-76

 Ladashinsky, Mendel (Ladd) 219
 Ladies Auxiliary, Newport 73
 Ladies Friendship Lodge 153
 Ladies' Hebrew Free Loan Association 501-512
 (see Hebrew Free Loan Association, Ladies')
 Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association 153-170, 506, 509, 512
 Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Foundation 168
 Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Pavilion 159-160
 Landauer, J. L. 356
 Landman, Roberta Botvin 208, 209
Landmarks, American Jewish, Rhode Island references in 447
 Lapin, Jack 514, 516, 517, 519, 521-522, 528-529, 531-532, 533
 Lappin, Charles, Mrs. 164
 Lappin, Rose H. 160
 Large, Shea 247
 Lasch, Christopher 399n
 Lasker, Charles 413-414
 Lasker, Henry 73
 Lasker, Hyman (Hayim) B. 413
 Lasker, Rabbi 412
 Lazarus, Emma inside back cover No. 1
 Leach, H., Mrs. 503, 504
 Leach, O. 344
 League of Rhode Island Historical Societies 175
Learning Among Jews, Life-Long 446
 Lebeson, Anita Libman 276n
 Lederer, George J. 356-357
 Lederer, Gertrude 412
 Lederer, Hedwig (Hattie) W. 412
 Lederer, Henry, and Brother, Inc. 251
 Leeman, Saul, Rabbi 167
 Leeser, Isaac, Rabbi 410
 Leicester Academy 35
 Leicester, Massachusetts, the Jews in 25, 26, 34-41, 271-272
 Leichter, Jack 203, 215, 216, 222, 228, 235, 238, 247, 255n, 256n, 257n
 Leichter, Simon 204, 249
 Lemberg, Galicia 121
 Leonard Azedeck (Linnath Hazedek) 219, 221, 224
 Lennon, Joseph P., Father 78
 Lepis, Clara Feinstein, Mrs. 155
 Lerner, Joshua 368
 Lerner, Mr. 205, 455
 "Letter-Box" in *Sabbath Visitor* 297-299
 Levenberg, Yehudah Heshel 150
 Levi, Edward H., The Honorable 320
 Levin, Beatrice 255n, 256n
 Levin, Jacob 285
 Levin, Mary Dannin 72n
 Levin, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Levine, M., Mrs. 503, 504
 Levinger, Lee J., Rabbi 276n
 Levy, Benjamin 15
 Levy, Hiam (Hvam) 15, 265, 271
 Levy, Isaac M. 44, 48, 50, 58
 Levy, Israel 301
 Levy, Joseph 352
 Levy, L. Napoleon 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 55, 62, 66, 67, 70
 Levy, Louis Edward 446
 Levy, Max 44, 48, 49, 54, 65, 74
 Levy, Max, Judge 74
 Levy, Moses 12, 15, 16, 23, 26, 68, 260, 261, 262, 265, 267, 271, 272

- Levy, S. 44
 Levy, Simeon 271
 Lewis, Edith B. 350
 Lewis, Israel 350
 Lewis, Sidney B. 350
 Lewis, Theodore, Rabbi 78, 302-304, 305, 314, 329, back cover, No. 2, 339, 442, 541, 543, 545
 Lewis, William 272
 Lewisohn, Leonard 52
 Lewisohn, Lillian 52
 Libby, Harold, M.D. 235, 294f
Liberty or Equality? 5-11
 Licht, Frank 548
 Licht, Jacob 511
 Licht, Jacob, Mrs. 511, 512
 Liebe, Sidney 358
 Lieberman, Abbott 369, 374, 375, 376, 377f, 381, 383n, 384
 Liebman, Joshua Loth, Rabbi 140
 Lifton, Betty Jean 400n
 Lightman's Delicatessen 246
 Lilienthal, Max, Rabbi 297, 329
 Lindman, Rebecca, Mrs. 160
 Linnath Hazedek (Lenard Azedeck) 219, 221, 224
 Lipit, Pia (Rubin) 511
 Lipshitz, Eliezer 430
 Lipsky, Selig 430
 Lisker, Abe 358
 Lisker, Bleumer, Mrs. 234
 Lisnoff, Sylvia G. (née Geller) 429
 Liss, Louis R. 339, 437
 Literary and Dramatic Club, South Providence 216
 Littauer, Nathan, chair of Jewish studies 141
 Litwin, J. W. V. back of front cover No. 1
 Loeb, William, Mrs. 447
 Locwe, Raphael 146
 London, Max 422
 London, Meyer 418
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, poem by, on the Newport cemetery 323, 326
 Lopez, Aaron 6, 12, 16, 18-32, 30n, 34, 35, 36, 37-41, 173, 178, 179, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 271-272, 273, 274n, 275n, 330, 446, 448, 461, 461n, 542, 548
 Lopez, David 12, 461n
 Lopez, Jacob 35, 461, 461n
 Lopez, Joseph 26, 28, 35
 Lopez, Moses 12, 16, 18, 20, 28, 260, 261
 Lopez, Samuel 461, 461n, 462
 Lopez, Sarah 28, 41
 Losben, Andrea Finkelstein 258
 Loyalists, Jewish 258-259, 265-273, 330
 Lyons, Alfred 48, 49
 Lyons, Jacques J. 171
 Lyons, Jacques Judah, Collection 173
 Machzeka Hadas Synagogue (Machzekas) 220, 221, 224, 242, 455
 Machzekas Hadas Orphanage (Machzeka) 242, 243
 Machzekas Hadas Synagogue (Machzeka, the Roumanian Shul) 220, 221, 224, 242, 455
 Make, Benny 455
 Makir, Miriam 415
 Mandell, Pauline Botvin 209
 Marcus, George 416
 Marcus, Jacob Rader 29n, 30n, 32n, 41n, 99n, 178, 262, 274n, 275n, 276n, 329, 330, 446, 461
 Marcus, Raphael 430
 Margolis, M. 239
 Margolis, Max 421, 426, 427, 428, 429
 Margolis, Rose 246
 Markensohn, Frank 236
 Markoff, Henry W. 167
 Markoff, Henry W., Mrs. 338, 458
 Marks, Herman 195
 Marks Jewelry Company 251
 Marvel, Frederick W. 367
 Marvin, Winthrop L. 31n, 32n
 Mason, Winifred 77
 Max, Harriet, Mrs. 162
 Max, Herman 155
 Mayberg, Abe 203, 455
 Mayberg, B., Mrs. 503, 504
 McKenna, Robert, Senator 541
 McLoughlin, William G., Ph.D. 459, 465f, 534, 548
 McSorley, Edward 255n
 Mead, Albert Davis, Professor 284
 Mechanic, Rose 149
 Medicine, early Jew in, in Providence 294-296
 "Medicine, Jews in" 383n
 Medus, Simon 261
 Melamut, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Mellion, M., Mrs. 503, 504
 Mendelssohn, Moses 286
 Mendes, Abraham 22, 25, 26, 34, 35, 271-272
 Mendes, Abraham Pereira 44, 54, 56, 63, 71n
 Mendes, H. P., Doctor 66
 Menorah Association at Brown University 549
 Men's Club, Temple Beth El 356-358
 Merchant, early Jewish, of Providence 461-470
 Merchants' Committee of Philadelphia 24
 Merchants, Jewish, of Newport 12-32, 258-273, 448, 548
 Meyer, Isidore, Rabbi 431n
 Meyer, Isidore S. 171
 Meyers, E. M., Rabbi 47
 Michel, Sonya A. 339, 385, 513

- Midrash on Psalms 141-142, 144, 146
mikveh 226
 Miller, Charles 418, 558
 Miller, Dorothy 558
 Miller, Jack 558
 Miller, Linda, chair of Jewish studies 141
 Miller, Louis 558
 Miller, Morris 425
 Miller, Noah 558
 Miller, Norman 352
 Miller, Rebecca 418
 Millman, Max 228, 257n
 Minister of Jewish Affairs, the Ukraine 137
 Minyan, the first, in Providence 410
 Miriam Hospital, The 153, 211, 236-237, 242, 515
 Miriam Hospital Association of Providence, The, Rhode Island 153, 234, 456
 Miriam Lodge 237
 Miriam Society, Number One 153, 242
 Mitchell, Lewis A. 70
 Mitler, Milton E., Col. 77, 302-303, 304, 312, 314
Modern City, A 225, 255n, 256n
 Moes Chitim fund 155, 155f, 163, 168-169
 Molasses Act of 1733 13, 14, 17
 Montefiore Lodge Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Association 152, 160, 163, 165, 167, 170n
 Montefiore-Touro Association 172
 Morais, Reverend 52, 56
 Morganstern, Lewis 390, 392
 Morgenrott, L. 222
 Morison, Samuel Eliot 143-144
 Moses, Samuel 21
 Mounted Combs business 251
 Mulhearn, Charles E. 342, 365
 Munro, Walter L., M.D. 235
 Muscovitz, Joseph 195
 Musleah, Ezckiel N., Rabbi 303-304, back cover No. 2
 Myers, Benjamin (Myer Benjamin) 18, 26, 265, 270
 Myers, Jacob 265
 Myers, Meyer 549
 Myers, Mordecai 271
 Myers, Rachel (Mrs. Benjamin) 270-271
 Nasberg, Bernard, Mr. and Mrs. 234
 Nathan, Edgar J. 48, 49
 Nathan, John 461n
 Nathanson, Max 447
 Nathanson, Samson, Judge 74
 National Historic Site, Touro Synagogue 440
 Navigation Laws, the 262
 Necrology 180-181, 332-336, 450-454, 550-557
 Adelman, Louise H. 1904-1977, 450
 Billingskoff, Morris d. 1978, 550
 Blacher, Bertha 1902-1978, 550
 Blackman, Alden, M.D. 1935-1977, 450-451
 Bolotow, Nathan A., M.D. 1894-1975, 180
 Chasan, Dorothy 1895-1977, 550-551
 Chaset, Nathan, M.D. 1911-1978, 551-552
 Cohen, Reuben 1907-1978, 552
 Dannin, John J. 1901-1976, 332
 Darman, Arthur I. 1889-1978, 552-553
 Fain, Louis 1896-1976, 332
 Felder, Jacob I. 1891-1976, 333
 Fierstein, Lester I. 1904-1977, 451
 Freedman, Stanley, M.D. 1897-1978, 553-554
 Goldstein, Abraham E. 1901-1978, 554
 Goodman, Jacob 1901-1976, 333
 Hanzel, Beatrice Sylvia 1917-1975, 180-181
 Holland, Harriet 1930-1976, 333-334
 Kaplan, Arthur 1902-1976, 334
 Lederer, George T. 1880-1977, 554-555
 Levitt, Jack 1905-1978, 555
 Markoff, Ruth d. 1978, 555-556
 Meller, Nancy B. 1917-1978, 556
 Pearlman, Israel 1898-1976 451-452
 Podrat, Bernard H. 1907-1976, 334
 Pranikoff, M. Leo, M.D. 1924-1977, 452
 Reich, Jacob, M.D. 1909-1978, 556
 Rubinstein, Lillian 1909-1976, 453
 Salmanson, Leonard I. 1910-1974, 181
 Samdperil, Sophie d. 1977, 557
 Schwartz, Harry A. 1902-1976, 334-335
 Silverman, Herman N. 1883-1977, 453-454
 Smith, Archie 1908-1977, 454
 Sundlun, Walter I. 1890-1976, 335-336
 Webber, Joseph B., M.D. 1894-1978, 557
 Needham, James George, Dr. 289
 Needham, Paul Robert, Dr. 289
 Neir Israel, Yeshiva 150
 Nelson, Charles L. 77
 Nelson, G., Mrs. 503, 504
 Nelson, Knute Ansgar 140-141
 Nelson, Walter 357-358
 New Idea Social Club 233

- "New Tenor" 17
 Newman, John L. 167
 Newman, Samuel 240
 Newport 12-33, 173, 175, 177, 178, 179, inside back cover No. 1, 258-276, 534E, 541, 548
 Bicentennial celebrations in 307-324
 British occupation 25-26, 258, 273
 civil liberties 267
 colonial taxation in 262-264
 decline of 28-29
 dedication of south fence, Patriots' Park 541, 544
 eclipsed by Providence 27-28
 economic decline 12-18
 Guinea trade 21-22
 Loyalists 258-259, 265-273, 330
 Newport Junto 330
 religious freedom in 260-261
 Strange Wives, novel about colonial Jews 325
 Tories 265-273, 330
 West Indies trade 13-15, 262
 Newman, Simon, Mr. and Mrs. 231
 Newport Herald 305
 Newport Historical Society 175, 177, 305, 329, 548
Newport History, Jewish references in 329, 548
 Newport Jewish Club 270
 Newport, Jewish merchants of 12-32, 258-273, 448, 548
 "Newport, In the Jewish Synagogue in" inside back cover No. 1
 Newport Junto 330
Newport, A Look at 172
Newport Mercury 18, 30n, 261, 274n, 275n, 541
Newport and its Vicinity, Sketches of 172
 Newport's Jews and the American Revolution 258-276
 Niantic Avenue picnic grounds 207
 Noah, Mordecai Manuel 179
 Noel, Philip W., Governor 312, 318
 Non-importation Agreement of 1765 263
 Noot, Myer, Reverend 411-412
 Norman, Aaron 347, 350, 352
 North End, Providence, c. 1900 211, 300-301
 North End Talmud Torah 413-414
 North Main Street, Houses on 447
Norwich, Connecticut, The Jews in 79-103
 Abelman, Anna D., Mrs. (Ableman) 87, 99n; Agudas Achim (Congregation of Brothers) 93; Alofsin, Herman 87, 88; Alofsin, Saul 89, 99n; Baron, Joseph, Rabbi 92; Baum, Samuel 82, 83; Bechert, Leopold 90; Behrisch, Bernard (Bernhard) 82, 83, 84-86; Behrisch, Clara 83, 84-86; Behrisch family 89; Behrisch, Gabriel I. 83, 84-86; Behrisch, Menno 84-86; Behrisch, Natalie 84-86; Behrisch, Ralph 84-86; Benevolent Ladies Aid Society 94-95; Benevolent Society, Hebrew Ladies 91; Berkman, Bessie 94; Berkman Memorial Library 94; Beth Jacob Synagogue 93-94, 96; Blinderman, Samuel 83; B'nai B'rith 96; B'nai B'rith Auxiliary 96; B'nai Zion, Order 95; Brothers of Joseph Sisterhood 94; Brothers of Joseph Synagogue 91-92; Burial Society 91; Cadden, J. W. 96; Calkins 99n; Cemetery, first Jewish, Norwich, Connecticut 80, 81, 90, 91; Chamansky, Adolph 80, 82; Chamansky, David 80, 90; Chamansky, Henrietta (Mrs. Joseph) 80, 91; Chamansky, Joseph 80, 82; Chamansky, Louis 80, 82, 85; Chamansky, Pauline (Mrs. Louis) 80; Clark, Mrs. Raymond 95; Cohen, Bernard Herman 87-88, 92; Cohen-Bokoff Post No. 93 98; Cohen, Mrs. Samuel L. 99n; Community House, the 93-94; Congregation of Brothers (Agudas Achim) 93; Congregation of Norwich, Connecticut 91, 92; Council of Jewish Women, Bozrahville 95; Cramer, Abraham, Mrs. 89; Dreyfus, Mr. 96; Eisenstein, Ira 93; First Hebrew Society, The, Connecticut 80, 81, 86-87, 90, 91; Geller, Michael D., Rabbi 93; Gilman, Nathan, Mrs. 95; Goldsmith, S. A. 82; Gordon, Charles 94; Gordon, David, Mrs. 95; Gordon, I., Mrs. 99n; Gotthelf, Moses 82, 85; Greenberger, George 93, 96; Hadassah, Norwich Chapter 95; Heads of families, 1900 100-103; Hebrew Institute, Norwich 92; Hebrew Ladies Aid Society 95; Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society 91; Herman, Mr. 92; Hertz & Son 88; Hirsch, Fannie (Mrs. Frank Jacobs) 83, 89, 99n; Histadrut 97; Hutzler family 85; Hyman, Moses 92; Immigrant Employment Agency 88, 89; Independent Order of B'rith Abraham 96; Israelite, William 94; Israelite, William, Mrs. 94; Jewish Fraternal Organization, Norwich 97; Jewish veterans 98; Jewish Women, Bozrahville Council of 95; Jewish Women, National Council of, New London County Section 95; Jewish Youth League 97; Jews residing in

- Norwich, 1900 100-103; Krause, Daniel 81, 90; Kromb, Jacob (Crumb) 92; Kronig family 85; Lahn, Joseph M. 92, 92f; Lahn, Kive 89, 91-92; Lahn, Max 92f; Leavens, Sarah Hall 85; Levenson, Mendel 92; Levin, Michael 99n; Levin, Michael, Mrs. 95; Library, Berkman Memorial 94; Lieder Krauz (Choral Society) 91; Maltzman, Marshall J., Rabbi 94; Margolis, Morris 93; Markoff, Jennie 89; Markoff, Kopland K., M.D. 87; Markoff, Lazar 87, 89; Markoff, Lazar, Mrs. 89; National Council of Jewish Women, New London County Section 95; Nelson, Zev, Rabbi 97; Norwich Free Academy 99n; Norwich Hebrew Education Association 96-97; Norwich Hebrew Institute 92, 94; Norwich Hebrew Institute Auxiliary 94; Norwich Jewish Fraternal Organization 97; Norwich residents, 1900 100-103; Occupations of Jews, 1900 100-103; Order B'nai Zion 95; O R T (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), Norwich Chapter 95, 97; "Pavilion" 82; "Peoples Relief Drive" 97; Plaut, Abraham 81, 82, 85, 89; Plaut, Abraham, Mrs. 91; Plaut, Gabriel 81; Plaut, Isaac 81, 82, 83, 85, 86-87, 89, 90; Plaut, Isaac, Mrs. 91; Plaut, Joseph 81, 82, 85, 91; Polsky, Daniel, Mrs. 95; Polsky, Joseph 98; Raphael, Ellis 80, 81, 82; Raphael, Sam 80, 82; Reisman, Rabbi Osher 93; Residences of Jews, 1900 100-103; Richter, M. 91; Rosenberg, Joseph N., Mrs. 94-95; Rosenberg, Joseph N., Rabbi 92-93; Rosenblatt, David 80, 82, 83; Russian Jewish family, first, Norwich, Connecticut 87; Sachnowitz, Benjamin, Rabbi 92; Safiah, Isaac 97; Samuel family 85; Samuels, M. 90; Schneider, C. 83; Schwartz, Abner 93; Scouting 97-98; Scars, Jacob 83f; Scars, John Berell 83f; Seidel, Abraham 83, 85, 89, 90; Seidel, Henry 83, 90; Seidel, Max 90; Seidenberg and Bachrach 82; Seidenberg, H. 82; Shereshevsky, D. 92; Shereshevsky, Emma 83; Shulman, S., Rabbi 93; Silverman, M. I. 92; Sisterhood, Beth Jacob 94; Sisterhood, Brothers of Joseph 94; Slosberg, Charles 88, 92; Slosberg, Jacob 93; Slosberg, Michael 92; Slosberg, Raphael 88; Slosberg, Simon 88; Sons of Israel, The 93; Spier, Levi 82, 89, 91; Spier, Nathan 82, 91; Stamm, M., Mrs. 99n; Stamm, Max, Rabbi 88, 93, 95; Stern, J. 82; Stern, Seidenberg & Co. 82; Swartzburgs, the 92; Synagogue, first, in Connecticut 79-80, 85; Szold, Henrietta, visit of 95; "Taftville Jews" 91; "Talmud Torah" Auxiliary 94; United Synagogue Youth 97; Wayfarer's Organization 92; Workmen's Circle 96; Workmen's Circle, auxiliary 97; Y M H A 97; Young Folks League 97; Young Judea 97; Zionist Organization of America 95-96
- Novgrad, Benjamin 358
- Occupations, South Providence 245-251
- Oken, scout 352
- "Old Neighborhood, The", article on South Providence 255n, 256n
- Order of Ezra 432-433
- Organ*, the 413, 435
- Orinin, Russia 104-117, 135-139, 277
- Orliansky, David, Reverend 413
- Orms Street Home for the Aged 157, 159
- Orphanage, Jewish, of Rhode Island 242, 243, 348, 353-356, 368, 385-400, 522, 558
- Orphanage, Machzeka Hadas (Machzekas) 242, 243
- Orphanage, of the Jewish, Ladies Auxiliary 389, 392, 393
- Orphanage, St. Mary's 400n
- Osborn, Henry 48, 49
- Ostrow, Mary Sydney (Mrs. Philip) 384, 504, 506, 511, 512
- Ott, Joseph K. 31n
- Ottenberg and Kanan 447
- Our Own Kind*, novel about South Providence 229, 255n
- Oursler, Will 364-365, 383n
- Outlet Company 167-168, 224-225, 341, 342
- Pacheco, Moses 178
- Padover, Saulk, Dr. 76
- Page, Ruth 447
- Palace Gardens 206, 207
- Pan Rakovitch 106, 108
- Pan Sadowsky 116
- Pareira, Miriam (Mrs. Solomon) 461
- Parcira, Solomon 461
- Pares, Richard 32n
- Parson, Charles 354
- Parvey, Celia (Mrs. Harry) 514-515, 520, 522, 526, 529, 533
- Parvey, Harry, D.M.D. 515
- Passover Journal* 435
- Paster, Herman 221, 232, 239, 243, 251
- Pastore, John O., U.S. Senator 78

- Patriots' Park at Touro Synagogue 541, 544-545
 Paull, Celia Botvin 209
 Pavlow, Jacob 238
 Peace Street School 230
 Pearce, F. Cliff 177
 Pearlman, Israel 451
 Pechow, Abraham 74
 Peixotto, Benjamin F., Hon. 411, 412
 Pell, Claiborne, Senator 78
 Pepper, Harry 232, 243
 Pereira, Abraham Mendes 15
 Perler's Bakery 191, 247
 Petlura, Hetman 137-139, 281
 Philanthropy, beginnings of, in Providence 239-241
 Phillips, N. Taylor (Phillips), Captain 48, 49
 Phillips, Anne 447
 Phillips Family Papers 173-174
 Phillips, N. Taylor (Phillips), Captain 48, 49, 171
 Philomathians 210
 Physical culture, promotion of 172
 Physician, early Jewish, in Providence 294-296
 Picnicking, South Providence Jewish Community 204-207
 Pincus, Mattie J. 412, 415
 Pitkin, Solomon 463
 Pitterman, Joy 145
 Pitterman, Marvin, Ph.D. 2, 186, 327, 338, 444, 458, 546
 Pitterman, Marvin, Mrs. 547
 Plain Street 196, 199, 216, 227, 228-229, 248
 Plainfield, Mark H., M.D. 235, 251
 Pobirs, Louis J., M.D. 235
podrachiks, entrepreneurs 117
 Pogroms 109-114, 135, 194
 Point Bridge, Newport 260
 Point Street School 230
 Polafsky family 228
 Politics, Jews in 237-239
 Polock, Abigail 26, 28
 Polock, Asher 272, 273
 Polock, Francis 15, 16, 265
 Polock, Isaack (Isaac) 12, 16, 260, 262
 Polock, Issachar 15, 16, 17, 260, 261
 Polock, Jacob 15, 16, 23, 178
 Polock, Myer 16, 26, 30n, 265, 266-267, 270
 Pomerantz, Norman, Mrs. (née Frances Berman) 257n
 Ponce, Abraham 357
 Ponce, J., Mrs. 503, 504
 Pool, David de Sola 32n, 72n
 Population, Jewish, before Civil War 441
 Postal, Bernard 178, 273n, 276n, 447, 548, 549
 Potter, Charles, M.D. 359-360
 Prager, Maurice, Mrs. 507
 Prairie Avenue 196, 199, 202, 204, 216, 236, 242, 245, 248, 249, 251
 Prairie Avenue Athletic Club 216-217
 Presidents, Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association 155
 Pritzker, Samuel, M.D. 144
 Pritzker, Samuel, Mrs. (née Ruth Silverman) 257n
 Privateering in Newport 13
 Program, joint meeting of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, National Historic Shrine, Inc. 176-177
 Providence Beneficial Association 423
 Providence City Directories, 1824-1853 461, 470
 Providence Community Fund 386
 Providence Hebrew Beneficial Association 423
 Providence Hebrew Day School 144, 417
 Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association 241, 256n
 Providence Jewelry Company 251f
 Providence Jews on North Main Street 447
 Providence Journal-Bulletin 343-344, 357, 358, 377, 383n, 399n, 412, 446n, 462, 466, 468, 469, 470, 539
 Providence Ladies' Auxiliary 165
 Providence Ladies Charitable Society 153
Providence Magazine 152
 Providence Plumbing Co. 205
Providence, The Houses of, Rhode Island references in 447
 Pulver, Joseph 347, 351, 352, 353, 358, 374, 376
 Rabinowitz, Eliezer Simcha, Rabbi 430
 Rabinowitz, Jack 238
 Rabinowitz, Nathan Yehudah Leib, Rabbi 413
 Rabinowitz, Sydney 347, 352
 Raisin, Jacob S., Dr., Rabbi 330
 Rakatansky, Ira 223
 Rand, Norman 352
 Rappaport, Leo, Mrs. 164
 Rathom, John R. 343, 365
 Raziel 433
 Reb Menasha 116
 Rebock, Max H. 74
 Red Army 136, 137, 138, 139
 Redwood Library Company 18, 260
 Redwood Library, Jews and the 267
 Redwood Lodge of Masons, No. 35 A.F. and A.M. 411

- Religious Freedom, Some Remarks on the Fragility of* 534-540
- Religious intolerance, late 18th century and 19th century 321-322, 534-539
- Religious persecution of American Indians 538-539
- Religious taxation 535-537
- Remonstrance of 1764 17
- Resh, Solomon 223
- Residents' Council, Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island 515
- Resnick (Resnik), Bezalel Nathan 449, 471-500
(see Resnik, Bezalel Nathan, a Memoir of)
- Resnick, Esther, Mrs. 160
- Resnick (Resnik), Ida (Mrs. Samuel) 158, 160, 162, 164
- Resnick (Resnik), Jeannette Shoham 499-500, 558
- Resnik, Bezalel Nathan, a Memoir of 449, 471-500
Abrams, Berel 489; Ahavath Sholom Synagogue 490; America, emigration to 485-489; Berlin, interlude in 488; Berlin, Naftali Zvi 471; Blazar, Andrew 498; Blazar, Evelyn and Milton 498; business, early, enterprise in Providence 491-492; business venture, first, in Vilna 478; *Chibat-Zion* movement 475; education, early 472-478; Elivahu, Rabbi 475; Emblem and Badge Manufacturing Company 493-494, 495-499; Epstein, Moshe Mordechai, Rabbi 476; Fain, Alfred A. 491; Fannie, death of 499; Finkel, Nosen, Rabbi 476; Frischman, David 477; German occupation of Vilna 480-484; Getz, Feivel 472; Ginzburg, Mordche Aaron 475; Hacohen, Bezalel, Rabbi 475; Hassenfeld, Henry 497; Herzl, Theodore, visit to Vilna 473; Israel, visits to 499-500; Klein, Simon 490; Kovno, life in 473-474, 476-478; Kretinga, town of 480, 484, 485; Lema, Moshe, Rabbi 475; Levensohn, Adam Hacohen 475; Margolin, Pieter 471; Memel, city of 484, 485; Mendelovitz, Leib, uncle 485; Mishkon Tfiloh Synagogue 490, 500; New York, interlude in 489; Niger, Shmuel 474; Petrushka, Simcha, Dr. 474; Priest, Boruch and Chasa Riva 490; Priest, Herman 490; Priest, Samuel 490, 491, 492; Priest, Zundel and Minna 480; Providence, life in 490-500; Resnik, Beverly Ann (Mrs. Andrew Blazar) 493, 496, 498; Resnik, Esther (née Petersohn) 496; Resnik, Fannie (née Priest) 480, 483, 484, 499; Resnik, Jeannette Shoham 499-500, 558; Resnik, Miriam 495; Resnik, Nathan and Fannie, picture of 486; Resnik, Nathan and Fannie, and Haika Priest, picture of 483; Resnik, Shmuel 494-495; Resnik, Sol Leon 492-493, 496, 497-499; Rivkes, Moshe, Rabbi 475; Rosenthal, Abraham, uncle 473; Salanter, Israel, Rabbi 475, 476-477; Sherman, Israel 485; Shoham, Morris W. 415, 418, 499, 558; *Sloboker Yeshivah* 473, 476-478; Strashun, Shmuel, Rabbi 475; Vilna, life in 471-475, 478-484; White, William 497; World War I breaks out 479-484; Yafschitz, Mr. 485, 486; Yeshivah, Ramyles 472; *Yeshivah* of Volozin 471; Zlotoyabko, Leib, uncle 473, 479
- Resnik (Resnick), Ida (Mrs. Samuel) 158, 160, 162, 164
- Resnik (Resnick), Jeannette Shoham 499-500, 558
- Revel, Bernard, Doctor 149, 150
- Review, Jewish* 344, 360, 383n
- Revolution, the American; as a civil war 259, 265; Bicentennial: celebrations of 302-324; and Newport's Jews 258-276
- Reznek, Samuel 446
- Rhode Island Archivists 546
- Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission 444
- Rhode Island, A Bicentennial History* 465f, 548
- Rhode Island Brigade 266
- Rhode Island, 1726-1800, Commerce of* 173
- Rhode Island Historical Society 456, 470
- Rhode Island History*, Jewish references in 448n
- Rhode Island: A History of Child Welfare Planning* 398n
- Rhode Island Immigrants, 1824-1924* 444-445
- Rhode Island Israelite* 436n
- Rhode Island Jewish Fraternal Association 241
- Rhode Island Jewish Herald 292, 293, 509
- Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association 4, 175-177, 178, 223, 273, 293, 420, 429, 513f, 533
annual meetings (1975) 175-176; (1976) 327-328, 456; (1977) 444-445; (1978) 546-547

- Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 4, 42, 174, 178, 255n, 256n, 293, 383n, 420, 512, 549
- Rhode Island Jews, Family and Community Networks Among* 513-533
- Rhode Island Materials in the American Jewish Historical Society 171-174
- Rhode Island Veteran Citizens Historical Association 411
- Rhode Island Workingman Charity Association 207, 240, 241
- Rhode Island Working Men's Association 207
- Rhode Island Workmen Beneficial Association 234, 240
- Rhodes on the Pawtuxet 207, 210
- Riccio, Augustine W. 166
- Richards, Benjamin, Chief of Police 58, 60-62
- Richards and Coddington 14
- Richardson, Abraham 195
- Richardson, Roland G. 151
- Riddell, Hugo 59, 61, 62, 65
- Rivera, Abraham Rodriguez 19, 26, 330, 446, 448
- Rivera, Jacob Rodriguez 6, 12, 16, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 34, 34n, 35, 41, 42, 57, 68, 260, 262, 264, 265, 267, 271-272
- Rivera, Seixas and Co. 26
- Robertson, Douglas S. 31n, 32n
- Robin, William L. 2, 186
- Robinson, Charles 204
- Robinson, David, Mr. and Mrs. 234
- Robinson, Maurice 197, 204, 215, 223
- Robinson Street 191, 196, 199, 221, 222, 229, 249, 251
- Robinson Street Shul 221-224, 229, 419, 422, 423, 455
- Rockefeller, Nelson A., Vice President 308
- Rocky Point 206
- Rodenberg, E. L. 299
- Rodenberg, Gustave L. 299f
- Rodinsky, Louis 300
- Roffce, Solomon 272
- Roger Williams Park 207, 217
- Roger Williams, The Pioneer of Religious Liberty* 172
- Roitman, Aaron 343, 347, 365, 373, 374, 375, 382, 383n, 384
- Rosc, Anne Kaufman 447
- Rose, Barnet 240
- Rose, Isaac 447
- Rose, James 413
- Rose, Laura Love 447
- Rosc, Max 239
- Rosen, Benton H. 2, 176, 186, 226, 235, 239, 294, 327, 338, 344, 384, 444, 458, 546, 547
- Rosen, Benton H., Mrs. 328, 445, 547
- Rosen, Daniel 62
- Rosen, David 62, 65
- Rosen, E., Mrs. 503, 504
- Rosen, Ephraim, Mrs. 154, 155
- Rosen, Harry 62
- Rosen, Herbert L. 344
- Rosen, Julie 242
- Rosen, Lizzie, Mrs. 196
- Rosen, Maurice 44
- Rosen, Max 344
- Rosen, Max, Mrs. 242
- Rosen, Samuel, Mrs. 160
- Rosen, Sigmund 239
- Rosenbach, A. S. W. 171
- Rosenbaum, William 357
- Rosenberg, Abie 354
- Rosenbloom, Joseph R. 32n
- Rosenfield, Eva, Mrs. 155
- Rosenfield, Minnie (Mrs. Marcus) 515, 518, 519, 521, 526, 527, 529, 533
- Rosenfield, Paul 519
- Rosenthal, Bernard 358
- Rosenwaike, Ira 403, 409n
- Ross, Max 222
- Rotch, Thomas 34
- Rotch, William 20
- Rotenberg, Adolph 223
- Roth, Cecil 274n, 276n
- Roth, I. Morgan 239
- Roth, Leon 146
- Rothman, David J. 400n
- Rothschild, Mr. & Miss 354
- Rotke, Sarah, Mrs. 234
- Rotman, Abe 205
- Rotman, Harold 352
- Rotman, Maurice 205
- Rottenberg, Dan 449
- "Roumanian Shul, 'The'" (Tifereth Israel) 220-221
- Rouslin, Charles, Mrs. 160
- Rubel, Charles M., Rabbi 167
- Rubenstein, Israel S., Rabbi 360, 361
- Rubin, Saul J., Rabbi 302-304, back cover No. 2
- Rubinstein, Louis Baruch 178, 351, 541
- Rubinstein, Louis B., Mrs. (nee Lillian Berger) 207, 257n, 453
- Rum trade 17, 21
- Russell, Joseph 264
- Russell, William 264
- Russian Army, a Jew in the 104-139
- Russian Revolution, the 135-139
- Russian Shul, the 218, 219, 224, 455
- Rutman, Walter 292
- Sabbath Visitor*, Cincinnati 297-299
- St. Eustatius 178
- St. Germain, Fernand 77-78
- St. John's Lodge 173
- Salk's Dry Goods Store 248

- Salomon, Haym 258
 Saltzman, David, Mrs. 503, 504, 507, 508, 511
 Saltzman, Sam 515-516, 518, 525-526, 527-528, 530-531, 533
 Salvador, Francis 258
 Samdperil, A., Mrs. 503, 504
 Samuels, Joseph 179
 Samuels, Leon 179
 Sanctuary, Ahavath Shalom Synagogue 426-427
 Sanford, Peleg 13
 Sarzedas, Abraham 260
 Schectman, Robert 429
 Schiavo, Bartholomew P., Ph.D. 338, 458
 Schlesinger, Arthur Meir 30n, 32n, 274n, 276n
 Schlossberg, Joseph 362, 363
 Seinersohn, Joseph Isaac, Rebbe 151f
 Schneider, D. Gus, Lt. 361
 Schoenberg, Adaline 160
 Scholem, Gershom 146
Schools, Jewish, and Teachers in Metropolitan Providence — the First Century 410-419
 Schreier, Alfred 48-49
 Schreier, Eugene 44, 45-72
 Schreier, Sarah 59, 61, 63-64, 66
 Schussheim, Morris, Rabbi 162, 163, 362, 365
 Schuster, Benjamin, Mrs. 508
 Schuster, G. and S. 46
 Schwartz, David, Mrs. 161, 165
 Schwartz, Esy 48, 50
 Schwartz, Harry A. 167
 Schwartz, Max 50
 Schwartz, Sigmund 47, 48, 49, 50, 65
 "Schwartz, Sullivan" 48
 Schwartzbard, Shalom 139
 Scoliard, Elisha 205
 Scoliard, Ethel 199, 205, 228, 255n, 257n
 Scoliard, Frank 199, 201, 205, 206, 234, 237, 240, 241, 252, 455
 Scoliard, Frank, Mrs. (née Sarah Rosen) 199, 234, 252
 Scoliard, Simon 251
Scout Trail 383n
 Scouting, Boy, in Rhode Island 341-384
 (See *Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island*)
 Scup, Jacob 359
 Segal, Anna 417
 Segal, Bernard (Beryl) 2, 104, 105, 170n, 186, 255n, 256n, 277-293, 330, 338, 339, 398n, 410, 415, 418, 430, 431n, 448, 458, 461, 558
 Segal, Beryl (see Bernard Segal)
 Segal, Chaya (Mrs. Bernard, Beryl) 104, 279, 283, 292, 328, 416, 445, 547
 Segal, Isaiah 291, 417
 Seidel, Jacob, Rabbi 44
 Seigle, Natalie R. (Mrs. Saul) 325
 Seitman, L., Mrs. 503, 504
 Seixas, Gershom Mendes 269
 Seixas, Isaac 12
 Seixas, Moscs Mendes 26, 28, 173, back cover No. 1, 260, 265, 272, 275n, 302, 304, 305, 318, 329, 437, 446, 448, 534, 537, 548
 Selonik, Lester 356
 Seltzer, Harry 342
 Seltzer, one 356
 Semonoff, Judah 230, 232
 Semonoff, Leon 230, 232
 Semonoff, Wolf 204
 Semonoff, Wolf, Mrs. 204
 Servadio, Jacob 44
 Service Fund, Newport 74
Sesquicentennial Booklet, 1824-1974, Rhode Island references in 330
 Sessler, Morris, Rev. Dr. (Rabbi) 299, 412
 Shaare Zedek, Congregation 224, inside front cover No. 4
 Shafrin, Morris 420
 Shafrin, Shlomo 423
 Shanbrum, David, Mrs. 234
 Shanbrum, Louis 234, 456
 Shanbrum, Louis, Mrs. 234, 456
 Shankman, Jacob K., Rabbi 140, 145
 Shapiro, (Myer) 420
 Shapiro, Nathan 239
 Sharp, Harold 344, 358
 Sharp, Robert 357
 Shatkin, Harry, Mrs. 502, 503, 504, 508, 511, 512
 Shatkin, P., Mrs. 501
 Shaw, Louis 251
 Shearith Israel Synagogue 12, 42, 43-72, 171, 173, 302, 330, 548
 Sheffield, William P. 66, 69, 70
 Sheffres, Samuel, Mrs. 155, 156-159, 160-162, 164, 165, 167-168, 170n
 Shein, Jack, Mrs. 234
 Sherman, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Shilstone, E. M. 178
 Shindler, Hyman 239
 "Shishlovitzer, The" 149-150
 Shkop, Shimon, Rabbi 149-150
 Shoham, Abraham I. 418
 Shoham, Morris W. 415, 418, 499, 558
 Shore, Joseph 238
Shetl life in Russia 105-117, 135-139, 277
 Shulman, Nahum, Rabbi 149
 Shuman, Howard 397, 399n
 Siegal, Abraham (Sigel) 48, 49
 Siegel, B., Mrs. 503, 504
 Siegel, Max. Mr. and Mrs. 234, 249, 251
 Sigal, Charles 239
 Sigel, Abraham (Siegal) 48, 49

- Silbergras, Simon 195
 Silberman, Rose (Mrs. E. A.) 158, 160, 162
 Silk, Dianah, Mrs. 158
 Silver, Eliezer, Rabbi 151f
 Silverman, Archibald 213, 247, 250, 252, 353-354, 362, 363, 447
 Silverman, Archibald, Mrs. 252, 354
 Silverman Brothers 202, 203, 213, 250-251, 447
 Silverman Brothers Mutual Relief Association, first concert and ball 212-215
 Silverman, Charles 213, 223, 232, 239, 250, 251, 447
 Silverman, Ezra 195
 Silverman, Florence (Mrs. George) 222, 255n, 256n, 257n
 Silverman, Harold 380, 384, 549
 Silverman, Herman 453
 Silverman, Ida (Mrs. Archibald) 252, 354
 Silverman, Pincus 239
 Silverman, Sammy 224
 Silverman, Samuel 232, 239, 240
 Silverman, Sidney 215, 357
 Silverman, Sonya 238
 Silverstein, Max, Mrs. 234
 Simon, Max 354
 Simonhoff, Harry 276n
 Simons, Max 356
 Sit-in at Touro Synagogue 42-72
 Skodak, Marie 400n
 Slater Mill 465
 Slocum, Edwin, Mrs. 152
 Slom, Aaron 77
 Slom, Earle 77
 Sly, Nelson A. 357
 Smira, Clara 237
 Smira, Simon 222, 223, 239
 Smith, Archie 417, 454
 Smith, Judith 400n
 Smith, Meyer, Cantor 360, 361, 419, 423
 Snell's Bakery 191, 247
 Snow, Morris, Mrs. 158, 160
 Snyder, Howard 377f
 Sobel, Ira, Mrs. 151
Social Studies, Jewish 409n
 Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, Bicentennial Celebration of 312-317, 320-324
 participants 312-314, 320
 Conley, Patrick, Professor; Dannin, William; Donnelly, Humphrey J., III, Hon.; Friedman, Samuel; Goldowsky, Seebert J., Dr.; Helfner, Benjamin; Katz, Eli, Rev.; Koussevitsky, David, Cantor; Levi, Edward H., Hon.; Lewis, Theodore, Rabbi; Licht, Frank, Hon.; Minifie, Charles, Rev.; Mitler, Milton E., Col.; Noel, Philip W., Hon.; Teitz, Alex G., Judge
 Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, National Historic Shrine, Inc. 175, 176, back cover No. 1, 312-317, 320-324, 534f, 544-545
 Socks, Morton 77
 Soloff, Mordecai, Rabbi 415
 Solomon, Abraham 48
 Solomons, Adolphus S. 171
 Soloveitchik, Moshe, Rabbi 150, 151f
 Sonneschein, S. H., Rabbi 411, 412
 Sons of Zion Congregation 167, 413, 430
 Sorrentino, Katie Goldstein (Mrs. Vincent) 227
 South Providence Business Men's Association 251
 South Providence Enterprising Association 240
 South Providence Gemilath Chesed Association 206, 218, 239
 South Providence Hebrew Congregation 218, 219, 224, 455
 South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association 206, 218, 239, 240, 241
 South Providence Hebrew School 232
 South Providence, Jews of 189-257, 548
 South Providence Ladies Aid Association 153, 160, 167
 South Providence Ladies Aid Society 241, 385
 South Providence, map of 190
 South Providence, stores in, circa 1947 191
 South Providence Thrift Association 240
 " Spectator, The " 74
 Spermaceti candle trade 19-20
 Spermaceti Chandlers, United Company of 19-20
 Spiegel's Meat and Poultry (Spigel) 191, 247
 Spigel, Fred 168
 Spiro, Jack D., Rabbi 303-304, back cover No. 2
 Spiro, Joseph Raphael, Reverend 410
 Spitz, Abraham A. 447
 Sprague, Asa 38-39
 Spunt, Jerome B. 2, 186, 338, 444, 458
 Stamp Act 22, 258, 263-264
 Stanhope, Clarence 72n
 Staniford Street 196, 226-227, 230
 Starr, Samuel, M.D. 235, 256n, 294-296
 State Institutions of Rhode Island, Festival Committee for 160-170
 Steamship Agency 245, 252
 Stearns, Charles H. 58, 60
 Steiner, Mr. 206
 Stern, Jacob 299f
 Stern, Malcolm H., Rabbi 30n, 32n, 175, 177, 178, 273n, 274n, 275n, 276n, 446

- Stern, Rose 297-299
 Stern, Sophia 298-299
 Sternbach, Abraham 420, 421, 422, 425, 425f, 428, 429
 Sternbach, Harold, Professor 420, 426, 429, inside back cover No. 3
 Sternbach, Marvin 425
 Sternbach, Minnie (Mrs. Abraham) 420, 425f
 Stiles, Ezra 15, 29n, 32n, 261, 273n, 276n, 320, 326, 329, 330, 331, 542
 Stirling, H. I. 357
 Stollerman, Maurice 390, 391, 392-393, 400n
 Stone Mill Lodge No. 3, Masons 78
Strange Wives, novel about Newport Jews 325-326
 Strasmich, Erwin E. 2, 175, 186, 327, 338, 458
 Strasmich, Erwin E., Mrs. 328, 445, 547
 Strasmich, Gertrude, Mrs. (née Urban) 257n
 Straus, Oscar Solomon 171, 172
 Strauss, Elsie Tatz 211, 257n
 Strauss, Joseph W., Mrs. 507, 508, 511
 Stuart, Gilbert front cover No. 3
 Sugar Act of 1764 17, 21, 23, 258
 Sugarman, Ruby 455
 Sugarman, William 455
 Sugarman's Dry Goods Store 249
 Sullivan, Mortimer A., Judge 75
 Summerfield, Fred 358
 Surinam 13
 Sussman, Harry 239
 Swan, Bradford F. 448
 Swartz, N. Russell 344, 347, 348, 350, 351, 354, 355, 357, 359, 364, 368, 371-372, 383n
 Sweet, Louis I. 2, 175, 186, 327, 338, 444, 458, 546
 Sweet, Louis I., Mrs. 2, 175, 176, 186, 327, 328, 338, 444, 458, 546, 547
 Sydney, Elmer 357
 Sydney, G., Mrs. 503, 504
 Sydney, Harold C. 342, 343, 344, 347, 362, 384
 Sydney, Israel, Mrs. 501
 Sydney, Myles 358
 Synagogue building, the first, in Providence 412
 Synagogue Council of America, Jubilee Anniversary of the, and Bicentennial celebration 307-311
 participants 307-308
 Brickner, Balfour, Rabbi; Brochstein, Samuel; Burns, Arthur F., Dr.; Finkelstein, Louis, Dr.; Freund, Paul A., Professor; Gerety, Peter Leo, the Most Rev.; Hornstein, Moses; Lehrman, Irving, Rabbi; Levinson, Morris L.; Lewis, Theodore, Rabbi; Linowitz, Sol M.; Lookstein, Joseph, Rabbi; Meyerson, Martin, Dr.; Myerson, Bess, Hon.; Peters, Roberta; Rabinowitz, Stanley, Rabbi; Rockefeller, Nelson A., Vice President; Rosenhaus, Matthew B.; Shenker, Israel; Siegman, Henry, Rabbi; Wiesel, Elie
 "Synagogue in Newport, In the Jewish" poem by Emma Lazarus inside back cover No. 1
 Synagogues, South Providence 218-227
 Szold, Henrietta 171
Tageblatt 230, 231
 Talan, Bessie Botvin 209
 Tallman, Benjamin, Jr. 461, 461n
 Talmud Torah, Orms Street 413-414
 Talmud Torah, West Warwick 423
 Talmud Torahs 433, 434-435
 Tatz, Max 211
 Tatz, Minnie, Miss 354, 364
 Tatz, Samuel 208, 210, 215, 234, 506
 Tatz, Samuel, Mrs. 234
 Teachers in Jewish schools in Metropolitan Providence 410-419
 Teitz, George 75
 Teller, Reverend 223
 Temkin, Jacob S. 365, 369, 375, 377f
 Temkin, Nathan 364
 Temkin, Sefton D. 329-330
 Temple Beth-El 144, 174f, 224, 291, 292, 351, 352, 356-358, 370, 380, 414-415, front cover No. 4, 522, 548, back cover No. 4
 Temple Beth-El Men's Club 356-358
 Temple Beth Israel 223, 343, 344, 346, 368, 370, 415, 558
 Temple Beth Sholom 419
 Temple Emmanu-El 178, 358, 370, 388, 415, 446, 558
 Temple Sinai 377-378
 Tennenbaum, Jacob 195
 Test Oath 266-267
 "The Spectator" 74
 Theater and cinema, history of, in Providence 447
 Theaters, the Golden Age of 447
 Thomas, Albert 367
 Thurston, Henry W. 398n
 Tichman, B., Mrs. 503, 504, 511, 512
 Tieder, Myra 396, 399n
 Tifereth Israel ("The Roumanian Shul") 220-221
 Tillinghast, James 66
 "To bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" 5, 9-10, back cover No.1
 Toby's Farm 206

- Toledot, The Journal of Jewish Genealogy* 549
- Torgan, Alfred 342
- Tories, Jewish 258-259, 265-273
- Torrey, Charles 150
- Touro, Abraham 42-43, 179, 269, 330, 442, 542, 543
- Touro Cadets 172, 210
- Touro, The, Congregation 47, 48-69
- Touro, de, Isaac Abraham (Isaac Touro) 15, 178, 261, 265, 266-267, 269-270, 272, 273, 330, front cover No. 3, 442-443, 541, 542, 549
- Touro family 178
- Touro, The, Funds 42-43, 45, 46, 56
- Touro, Isaac, Rev. (Isaac Abraham de Touro) 15, 178, 261, 265, 266-267, 269-270, 272, 273, 330, front cover No. 3, 442-443, 541, 542, 549
- Touro, Judah 42-43, 179, 269, 323, 441, 442, 542, 543, 549
- Touro, Judah, Lodge No. 998 73-78
- Touro Monthly* 442f
- Touro, Reyna Hays (Mrs. Isaac) 269-270
- Touro Synagogue front cover No. 1, 5, 6, 33, 42-72, 73, 74, 77, 173, 177, 179, inside back cover No. 1, back cover No. 1, 259, 261, 272-273, 308, 311, 312-313, 314, 318, 319, 320, 326, 329, 330, 331, 437, 440-441, 448, 534f, 540, 541-543, 544-545, 548, 549
- Touro Synagogue, Bicentennial celebration of 312-313, 318-319
- participants 312-313, 318
- Conley, Patrick, Professor; Dannin, William; Donnelly, Humphrey, J., III, Hon.; Friedman, Samuel; Goldowsky, Seebert J., Dr.; Helfner, Benjamin; Katz, Eli, Rev.; Koussevitsky, David, Cantor; Levi, Edward H., Hon.; Lewis, Theodore, Rabbi; Licht, Frank, Hon.; Minifie, Charles, Rev.; Mitler, Milton E., Col.; Noel, Philip, Hon.; Teitz, Alex G., Judge
- Touro Synagogue Museum 177
- Townshend Act of 1770 24, 258, 263, 264
- Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America*, Newport extract from 33, 33n, 172
- Treaty of Paris, 1763 259
- Tremont Hall 232, 249
- Triangular slave trade 14, 21
- Trinkle, Murray 357
- Troupiansky, David, Mr. and Mrs. 234, 251
- Troy Laundry 249
- Tubman, Abraham 359
- Turco, Stanley P. 374, 376, 384
- Turcott, B., Mrs. 503, 504
- Turoff's Farm 207
- Twecdy, John and William 14
- 20th Century Elite Club 233
- Twersky, Rebecca 339, 419n, 420
- Twersky, Rickel 429
- Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture*, Rhode Island references in 331
- Tzar of Russia 108, 111, 135, 136
- Udisky, Z., Mrs. 503, 504
- Ukraine, the 135, 136, 137, 139
- United Moes Chitim Fund 155, 155f, 163, 168-169
- United States Bureau of the Census 409n
- Urban, I. 239
- Urban, Louis 240
- Vaad Hakashruth 241
- Vanity Fair 210
- Verman, scout 352
- Vernon, Thomas 32n
- Voight, Ernst 61
- Volpe, Rcuben 300
- Wagner, Charles 65
- Wagner, Moses 47, 48, 49, 50, 65
- Wahrheit* 230
- Wallach, Anthony 48, 49, 64
- Walters, Eugene, Professor 285
- Wanton, Joseph 14, 267
- Warren, George, Mrs. 177
- Washburn, Emory 34, 37n, 40n
- Washington, George 5, 5f, 9-10, 179, back cover No. 1, 302, 304, 305-306, 308-309, 318, 320, 321, 329, 339, 437, 438, 446, 448, 534, 536, 537, 538, 539
- Washington, the George, letter 5, 5f, 9-10, 179, back cover No. 1, 302, 304, 305-306, 308-309, 318, 320, 321, 329, 339, 437, 438, 446, 448, 534, 537, 548, 549
- Washington, George, Letter Ceremonies 5, 5f, 9-10, 339, 437-439, 440f, 534f
- Wasserman, Max 61, 65
- Waterman, Charles 78
- Wax, Bernard 171, 175, 339, 440
- Waxman, Dorothy 292
- Webber, Joseph, Mrs. (née Sarah Olch) 211, 224, 244-245, 246, 255n, 257n, 399n, 400n

- Wechsler, Herman 195
 Weinberg, P. 300
 Weiner, Benjamin 359
 Weiner, Herman 46
 Weinstein, Lewis 146
 Weintraub, Jacob 195
 Weisinger, Daniel 352
 Weiss, Clifford 75
 Weiss, Ignatz, Mrs. 157, 160
 Weissman, Rosa, Mrs. 155
 Weitman, Aaron 239
 Werblowsky, Zvi 146
 Werner, Asher, Rabbi 150
 Werner, David, Rabbi 416-417
 Werner, Joshua, Rabbi 416-417
 Wessel, Morris J. 447
 West Indies trade 13, 17-18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28
 West, James E. 351
 What Cheer Hall 218, 224
 Wheatley, Nathaniel 22, 30n
 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, 1909 393
 Whiteman, Maxwell 274n, 276n
 Widerscope program 74
 Wiener, Norbert 143
 Wiesel, Nathaniel 239
 Willard Avenue 189, 190, 191, 193, 195-199, 201, 202, 203, 204, 207, 215, 217, 218, 226, 227, 228-229, 230, 231, 232, 236, 239, 241, 242, 243, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 414, 418, 422, 423, 548
 Willard Avenue School 230, 243
 Willard Avenue *Shul* 217, 218, 220-221
 Williams, George, Professor 147
 Williams, J. Harold 341, 342, 343, 347, 367, 371, 375, 378, 380, 383n
 Williams, Roger 320, 330, 362, 448, 534-535, 537
 Wilsker, Barney 47, 71
 Wilson, James 272
 Winkler brothers, the 224, 228
 Winnerman, Ruby, Miss 455
 Winograd, L., Mrs. 503, 504
 Winograd, Max 158, 511
 Winter Street 197
 Wise, Henry 380
 Wise, Isaac M., Rabbi 297, 412
 Wise, Stephen, Rabbi 52
 Wolf, Edwin, 2nd 274n, 276n
 Wolf, Joseph A., Mrs. 152
 Wolfe, Abraham 356
 Wolfenson, L. B., Ph.D. 392
 Wolfson, Harry A. 140-148, 151
 Wolk, Simon 234, 239, 240
 Wolk, Simon, Mrs. 234
Woman, The Immigrant 447
Woman, The Jewish, Liberated 501
 Woodoff, Abraham 342
 Woolf, Betty, Mrs. 234
 Woolf, Henry 354, 355, 391-392, 393
 Woolf, Isaac 351, 354
 Woolf, Isaac, Mrs. 155, 156
 Woolf, Ruth (Mrs. Joseph Adelson) 456
 Woolf, Sadie Botvin 209
 Woolf, William 358
 Workmen's Circle Branch 110 233
 Workmen's Circle Lyceum, Rochester, New York 288
 Workmen's Circle, St. Paul, Minnesota 283
 Workmen's Circle schools 283, 285-288, 291, 417-418
 Yaffe, Hyman 301
 Yarous, B., Mrs. 155
 Yellin, David, Teachers Seminary 415
 Yeshiva Achei Temimim (Lubavitcher Yeshiva) 416-417
 Yeshiva College 149
 Yeshiva Neir Israel 150
Yiddish, The Declining Use of, in Rhode Island 401-409
 (See *Yiddish, use of, in Rhode Island*)
 as mother tongue by nativity status 406
 as mother tongue, distribution in in Rhode Island 408
 mother tongue, foreign born persons of, United States and Rhode Island 405
 U. S. Bureau of the Census 1920, 1930, 1940, 1960, 1970 409n
 Yiddish, use of, in Rhode Island 286-287, 399, 401-409, 413
 (See *Yiddish, The Declining Use of, in Rhode Island*)
 Yiddish, use of, in Workmen's Circle schools 286
 Young Ladies Hebrew Aid Society of Providence, Rhode Island 153
 Young, Lena, Mrs. 160
 Young Men's Endeavor Association 210f
 Young Men's Hebrew Association, Providence 210, 360, 361, 367, 378
 YMHA and YWHA, Newport 73, 75
 Young, S., Mrs. 503, 504
 Young Sons of Israel 299
 Young Women's Hebrew Association 153, 378

- Zaidman, G., Mrs. 503, 504
Zellermayer, Abraham 189, 193, 197, 210,
221-223, 234, 239, 241, 255n
Zellermayer, Abraham, Mrs. 234, 247, 250,
254
Zellermayer daughters 210
Zion, Sons of, Congregation 167, 413, 430
Zionism in Providence 238-239
Zisman, Lena 237
Zitserman, J., Mrs. 503, 504
Zuger, Harry 195
Zundell, Carl 356
Zurier, Melvin L. 2, 175, 176, 186, 327,
338, 444, 458, 546
Zurier, Melvin L., Mrs. 328
Zusman, Harry 250
Zussman, H. 239



BACK COVER

Interior of Temple Beth-El, *circa* 1934.
See front cover and caption inside front cover.

