Samuel Rapaporte Jr., 86; fashion pioneer, philanthropist

PROVIDENCE — Samuel Rapaporte Jr., 86, of 395 Rochambeau Ave., a pioneer in the fashion jewelry industry and a philanthropist, died yesterday at Hallworth House. He was the husband of Rieka (Winthrop) Rapaporte.

In 1938, he founded S. Rapaporte and Co., a jewelry manufacturing firm which he estalished on Chestnut Street. He later opened a factory in Attleboro, Mass., which he operated for 40 years. During World War II, he converted his equipment and presses to the manufacture of bandages.

In the 1940s, he began a long relationship producing fashion jewelry for Trifari, Krussman and Fishel, a relationship that lasted due to Mr. Rapaporte's innovative designs and techniques.

In the 1960s, he joined Trifari Co. and it became the original supplier to the Avon Products Co. in connection with the latter's entry into the fashion jewelry field.

Mr. Rapaporte sold the business 10 years ago and it has subsequently closed down.

Born in Providence, he was a son of the late Samuel and Tilly (Foster) Rapaporte.

He was a major contributor to numerous Rhode Island charitable causes including the United Way. He was a fellow of Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., where he established the Samuel Rapaporte Jr. Treasure Hall and Art Museum on campus.

In 1963, the Hillel Foundation at Brown University named its headquarters at 80 Brown St. the Samuel and Rieka Rapaporte Hillel House in appreciation of his support. That location became a center for religious, cultural and social activities for Brown, Bryant College, the Rhode Island School of Design and Rhode Island College.

RAPAPORTE, SAMUEL JR.

Mr. Rapaporte was an ardent supporter of the State of Israel from its inception. He had been a vice president and treasurer of the former General Jewish Committee, now the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, and for several years served as chairman of the jewelry division for the annual fund-raising campaign.

Mr. Rapaporte was a member of the board of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, a member of the board of trustees of Miriam Hospital, the board of trustees of the Jewish Home for the Aged, Temple Emanu-El and Hillel House. He was a member of Roosevelt Lodge 32, F&AM.

Besides his wife, he leaves a daughter, Renee Burrows of Chestnut Hill, Mass.; a sister, Mary Port of Worcester, Mass.; two brothers, Hye Rapaporte of Providence and Max Rapaporte of Hallandale, Fla.; three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El, Morris Avenue. Burial will be in Sharon Memorial Park, Sharon, Mass.