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This Bicentennial Issue of the

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

is dedicated to the

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as a token of appreciation for its generous support of the

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and its sympathetic understanding of the objectives of

the Association.
LIBERTY OR EQUALITY?
by JEROME A. BARRON*

I.

Thomas Wolfe said that you can't go home again and this is true in the sense that it is impossible to make a journey to one's past. Yet it is possible for memory to operate more sharply when one is once again upon the scene, as commercial television describes it, of "Happy Days." The first time I spoke here I spoke from the pulpit at my bar mitzvah. At that time I was little more than eye level to the top of the pulpit. So it is good to speak here at last and really be able to see the audience.

There are few other buildings on this continent which so exemplify Jewish life in America and religious freedom in America. Those of us who have been, or are, part of this community are aware that this building has had great personal meaning for us in our own lives.

Nearly thirty years ago I was bar mitzvah in this synagogue, and nearly twenty-five years ago I was a guide here. The symbolic role in Jewish and American history of this synagogue was underscored for me that summer I was a guide when I saw the enthusiasm of the visitors to the building, no matter what their faith. But I did not need a summer as a guide to teach me the significance of the fact that the man who became the first president of the United States, George Washington, had so warmly, generously, and liberally greeted the Jewish community of this city in the letter the anniversary of which we celebrate today. The words George Washington used in his famous letter, that this country gave "to bigotry no sanction and to persecution no assistance", have been matched by performance in the intervening centuries. As a result historians have justly referred to American Jewish history as history without tears. It is easy, of course, to see why. Although Jews have lived on the continent of Europe since Roman times, still recent horrors remind us that few synagogues in Europe even two hundred years of age still stand.

To me as a boy what was important was not only the visible symbol of religious freedom in America which this synagogue represented, but equally the significance of this synagogue as a reminder of the continuity of Jewish experience in America. It is of course true that the

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*Professor of Law, George Washington University.
largest wave of Jewish immigration to this country came in the late
nineteenth century. Indeed, for most of the nineteenth century there
was no Jewish community in this city.

But it is also true, and it meant a great deal to me, that in the
youth of this republic, in the American genesis as it were, people of
Jewish faith helped to build and defend the nation that became the
United States of America. Indeed, on the whole so devoted to the
revolutionary cause was the Jewish community of eighteenth century
Newport that its most distinguished member, Aaron Lopez, had to flee
to Massachusetts to escape the British. The visible and evident com-
mitment of the Jewish people to American liberty at the formative
period of growth of the United States was very precious to me, a boy
growing up in a community which consisted essentially of the children
or grandchildren of recent immigrants. It was precious because Hitler's
propaganda was attempting to destroy the image of Jewry throughout
the world including the United States. One of its principal themes
was that Jews were aliens in the United States and had not participated
in the American tradition. But the plaques on the buildings of down-
town Newport bearing the names of colonial Jewish settlers, such as
Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, combined with the living reality of this
synagogue, eloquently contradicted these calumnies.

It seems strange even to me now that in free America I needed this
assurance. But when I reflect that I was born in 1933 and bar mitzvah
in 1946, I realized that that period, the Hitler era, was probably the
darkest period of Jewish history since the destruction of the temple by
the Romans.

The reality of this synagogue was not the only evidence in the New-
port of my boyhood of the continuous vitality of the democratic idea
in this city. For a Newport boyhood gave witness everywhere to the
continuing devotion to the part of American experience which was
pledged to human freedom. After all, Newport in the nineteenth
century was as faithful to the values of human liberty as it was in the
eighteenth century. Here lived Julia Ward Howe, the eloquent aboli-
tionist and author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, the tune which
became the marching song of redemption for black people in bondage.

Thus far in these remarks I have spoken to you of boyhood memories
of this synagogue, town, and community. But you have asked me here
today I think not only to speak to you of the past, but also to discuss
some of the contemporary issues that currently perplex American con-
stitutional law. It is in my opinion not too great a leap from the New-
port world of Touro Synagogue and Julia Ward Howe to the current problems of liberty and equality in America.

II.

Let me give you an example. Recently the Supreme Court of the United States was presented with a case of great difficulty and of great importance. The facts of the case were basically simple. A young man of Sephardic Jewish ancestry, Marco De Funis, applied to his state university law school. He was denied admission although the state university law school granted admission to minority students whose credentials were less impressive than his.

In the case of which I am speaking, however, the young law school applicant asserted that he had been discriminated against. Let me give you some of the flavor of the issues that were raised by this case.

The Supreme Court of Washington sustained the university's position and not that of Marco De Funis. The state supreme court accepted the contention that, where the factor of race was used to benefit those minority groups, Blacks, Chicanos, Filipinos, and American Indians who had suffered from past discrimination, such discrimination should be considered benign. The state court conceded that "the minority admissions policy is certainly not benign with respect to minority students who are displaced by it." Nevertheless, the Washington Supreme Court concluded that on a balancing of interests the interest of the minority student should prevail. The state supreme court supported its reasoning as follows:

It can hardly be gainsaid that the minorities have been, and are, grossly underrepresented in the law schools — and consequently in the legal profession — of this state and this nation. We believe the state has an overriding interest in promoting integration in public education. In light of the serious underrepresentation of minority groups in the law schools, and considering that minority groups participate on an equal basis in the tax support of the law schools, we find the state interest in eliminating racial imbalance within public legal education to be compelling. 82 Wash. 2d 11, 507 P.2d 1169 (1973).

The arguments recited above are powerful ones. But as is the case with most troublesome problems that beset a free society, the arguments of Marco De Funis to the contrary are also powerful. In an amicus brief for De Funis to the United States Supreme Court on behalf of B'na'i B'rith, Philip Kurland, and the late distinguished scholar and teacher, Alexander Bickel, the arguments for De Funis were set forth:
It is our position that a racial classification that takes the form of a racial quota, as in this case, is unconstitutional vel non, because racial quotas are anathema to the concept of individual freedom. A racial quota is derogatory to those whom it is intended to benefit and depriving of those from whom is taken what is 'given' to the minority. A beneficent quota is as invidious as it is patronizing.

The issues raised by the De Funis case are profoundly difficult ones. For the fact is that for many in this country history has not been history without tears. For members of such groups the harsh heritage of the past still cripples opportunities for the future. To what extent may the state act today to make amends for the wrongs it has done in the past? And to what extent, if at all, may those who had no part in past injustice be made to pay the price today for remedying that injustice? Finally, there is the ultimate tension provoking problem: Can racism however benign in motive ever be used as a tool to eliminate racism?

Can we compensate for past inequalities that were justified on the basis of race without creating new injustices? Is it true as Professors Kurland and Bickel phrased it that: "So-called affirmative action programs that are not circumscribed in terms consistent with the Equal Protection Clause collapse into the very evil they seek to cure"?

Jewish organizations were deeply divided by the De Funis case. The Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Rights Council all filed amici curiae briefs for De Funis. On the other hand, the National Council of Jewish Women represented by veteran civil liberties lawyer, Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., appeared against De Funis.

It is little wonder that such division occurred. There is support in the law both for and against approaching constitutional rights as a matter of group status.

As many of you know, the Supreme Court did not choose to resolve the claims of competing demands for liberty and equality raised by the De Funis case. Since De Funis would complete his studies no matter what the resolution of the case by the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court declined to decide whether the University of Washington’s admission program implemented or violated the guarantee of the equal protection of the law of the Fourteenth Amendment.*

It is interesting that in a dissent to the Court's refusal to decide the case, a dissent which contained some ideas not necessarily helpful to De Funis's cause, Mr. Justice Douglas did express himself clearly on the broad question I discuss with you today: Should our constitutional rights be dependent on occasion on the group to which we belong or should our constitutional rights arise solely from our status as individuals? On this point, Justice Douglas said:

There is no constitutional right for any race to be preferred. • • • A De Funis who is white is entitled to no advantage by reason of that fact. nor is he subject to any disability, no matter his race or color. Whatever his race, he had a constitutional right to have his application considered on its individual merit in a racially neutral way. 416 U. S. 312 at 336-337.

There have been times when the Supreme Court in fact has recognized that one's status as a member of a group is in fact intimately related to one's ability to enjoy the liberties conferred by the constitution.

In 1952, in a case which the Supreme Court has subsequently criticized but not reversed, Mr. Justice Frankfurter speaking for the court in a 5-4 decision, upheld an Illinois criminal libel statute punishing among other things publications which exposed citizens of any race, color, or creed to contempt or derision. Mr. Justice Frankfurter justified the validity of the Illinois group defamation law on the following grounds:

It is not within our competence to confirm or deny claims of social scientists as to the dependence of the individual on the position of his racial or religious group in the community. It would, however, be arrant dogmatism, quite outside the scope of our authority in passing on the powers of a State, for us to deny that the Illinois legislature may warrantably believe that a man's job and his educational opportunities and the dignity accorded him may depend as much on the reputation of the racial and religious group to which he willy-nilly belongs, as it does on his own merits. This being so, we are precluded from saying that speech concededly punishable when immediately directed at individuals cannot be outlawed if directed at groups with whose position and esteem in society the affiliated individual may be inextricably involved. Beauharnais v. Illinois, 343 U. S. 250 at 263 (1952).

III.

Should the law's treatment of individuals be affected by the group to which the individuals belong? We celebrate George Washington's
letter to the Jews of Newport because among other reasons it contains the idea that one class of people do not enjoy their natural rights through the "indulgence of another." It is not a transitory indulgence for the group to which we belong which wins for us the blessings of liberty. Under the doctrine of natural rights of which Washington spoke in his letter, it is the right of each citizen, by virtue of his individuality and his humanity, to claim the blessings of liberty. As Washington put it, all the government of the United States requires of those who live under its protection is that they "should demean themselves as good citizens." The understanding of liberty proclaimed in Washington's letter is that each individual lays claim to liberty not by virtue of the group to which he belongs but as a matter of individual right.

To press the point, our rights to liberty as Washington perceived them and as I think, in large part the American constitutional tradition has conceived them, has been to think of rights and duties as flowing to individuals as individuals rather than as members of a group. But the single great rebuttal, of course, to the existence of this tradition is the fact of slavery. That is of course the great contradiction to the general principle of dignity and equality of each individual. It is the harsh legacy of slavery that makes insistence upon an individual approach today to the problem of achieving contemporary racial justice and equality so incomplete and unacceptable a solution to so many.

In the De Funis case our nation grapples with the force and accuracy of Jefferson's observation on slavery: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

You have been patient with me as I have set forth the issues and the problems raised by the great case I have been describing. But surely you are asking yourselves at this point: Well, where should we take our stand? For or against De Funis? Should we choose the view that the right to pursue a career to the limit of aspiration and ability is the very essence of liberty? Or should we choose the view that the legacy first of slavery and then of discrimination cannot be overcome by a mere pledge of free entry to the competitive race based on merit? I hope you will not be too impatient with me if I tell you that I find the competing claims for individual liberty and for group equality each so just that I cannot choose between them. Although it is almost a professional obligation for a constitutional law teacher to disagree with the Supreme Court, I cannot say that in this case that their response was an unwise one.
The Court by saying the case was moot avoided the necessity of subordinating liberty to equality, of placing group status before individual right. Whichever of these precious values was chosen in this context over the other, justice would suffer. Instead, the Court left the nation with the task of struggling between these values, between now moving in one direction and now in another. At least for the interim this may be the wisest course. The original impulse in the universities to begin a minority admissions program, first fed by a feeling of ethical duty in the aftermath of the slaying of Martin Luther King, is not what it was. If in addition to declining ethical impulse such programs had to bear the burden of either a declaration of unconstitutionality or of constitutionality, I am doubtful that such a development would aid the cause of minority admissions.

The problem of the *De Funis* case reminds me of the ancient riddle of the Hebrew sage, Hillel:

> If I am not for myself, who will be?
> If I am only for myself, what am I?
> And if not now, when?

Constitutionally, as well as ethically, all of us have a right to be for ourselves, but we also have a duty to think of others. If there is a conflict between that right and that duty, when do we resolve it? The Supreme Court in *De Funis* said in essence: “Not now.” But, in the words of Hillel: If not now, when?

Our society is not yet ready to reconcile the important but conflicting values at stake in the *De Funis* case. Our society must first work at the pursuit of liberty with respect for equality and in the quest for equality with due respect for liberty. Then, if we are lucky, no final weighting of these values will be necessary, because the accommodation that our society will have reached between them will be both tolerable and just.

In the meantime, as a spur we must keep all of Hillel’s questions before us, because they are America’s questions also.
THE JEWISH MERCHANTS OF NEWPORT
1740-1790
by Marilyn Kaplan, M.A.

The rise and decline of the Jewish community in Newport coincided with fluctuations in that seaport's economy. From this fact filiopietistic historians have concluded that Jewish merchants were responsible for Newport's commercial growth. However, contrary evidence indicates that the Jews did not cause, but responded to the changing economic situation. Newport's commercial growth preceded the mid-century arrival of the Jews. Jewish businessmen who came to Newport from 1740 to 1770 were attracted by the economic opportunities of a growing seaport. Many of them were energetic businessmen whose mercantile efforts were enhanced by the friendly cooperation of fellow co-religionists in other ports. Their successes contributed to Newport's commercial growth.

The American Revolution scattered the Jewish community and devastated Newport's commercial life. Those Jews who remained in Newport, or returned after the revolution, worked to revive trade. It was only after it became apparent that Newport was destined to remain a second-rate port that the Jewish community dispersed. The departure of the Jews did not cause Newport's commercial decline. The Jewish community gradually disappeared as the older men died and the younger men left in quest of improved economic opportunities.

ARRIVAL OF JEWISH MERCHANTS IN NEWPORT

Existing evidence indicates that at least nine Jewish merchants came to live in Newport during the 1740s. Abraham and Naphtali Hart, Jacob Judah, Moses Lopez, Moses Levy, Isaac Seixas, Isaack Polock, and Jacob Rodriguez Rivera all came directly from New York. Initially they continued their affiliations with the Shearith Israel Synagogue in New York and maintained dual residency in New York and Newport. These ambitious tradesmen regarded their move to Newport as an exploratory business venture. By the 1750s their faith in the commercial opportunities of this vigorous young port had been justified. All of the nine dropped their New York residencies and synagogue memberships as their Rhode Island businesses became more active. Proof of their confidence in Newport's future is the arrival of additional members of their families. In the 1750s Isaac, Benjamin, and Jacob Hart joined Abraham and Naphtali Hart. David and Aaron Lopez came directly from Portugal to join their brother Moses.

Few ambitious merchants had been attracted to seventeenth century Rhode Island. The opportunities were limited because there was no
direct trade between England and Rhode Island and almost all English imports came to Rhode Island through the port of Boston. However, despite the colony's dependence on Massachusetts for the importation of most manufactured goods, Rhode Island did begin some direct trade with the West Indies. Peleg Sanford of Newport, one of Rhode Island's most important seventeenth century merchants, was an employee of the Boston Hutchinson family. Sanford managed the Hutchinson's Rhode Island cattle farms and exported their horses and provisions directly to Barbados. In the West Indies, with the aid of his brother in Barbados, he acquired goods which he exchanged with merchants from Massachusetts and Connecticut. Although Peleg did not conduct any direct trade with England, he did act independently in the conduct of his West Indian trade. In the seventeenth century Rhode Island's foreign trade was limited to the West Indies, and the West Indies trade remained light. It was the growth of this West Indies trade that eventually brought prosperity to eighteenth century Newport.

According to the late Bruce Bigelow's definitive, but unpublished account of the "Colonial Merchants of Rhode Island", the stage was set for the great age of Newport commerce in the Middle Period from 1733 to 1756. Bigelow shows that during this period Rhode Island trade was "expanding and flourishing" mainly due to the trade with the French West Indies. The prohibitive duties placed on sugar, non-English molasses, spirits, and rum by the Molasses Act of 1733 were not enforced. Colonists freely violated the Act, and Newport continued to expand its trade with the French, Dutch, and Spanish West Indies. During King George's War with France (1744-1748), Newport became a center for privateering activity. The newly arrived Jewish merchants joined in, but did not initiate this profitable trade. When the privateering ship "Pearl" was seized in Rhode Island, Abraham Hart appeared in court to represent the two West Indian Jews found aboard the ship. Hart asked for the freedom of Emanuel Alvares Correa and Moses Cardozo. He offered a sum twice the value of the ship, its cargo, and court costs and guaranteed the lawful sailing of the vessel if it were turned over to him. Members of the Jewish community in the West Indies acted for Hart and others in arranging illicit trade with the French islands. Newport's shipping prospered during the war as most merchants became involved in privateering.

WEST INDIES TRADE

In the years of peace immediately following King George's War, Newport's trade with the West Indies and the Dutch colony of Surinam continued to grow and prosper. Rhode Island merchants continued to
smuggle foreign sugar and molasses in violation of the loosely enforced Molasses Act. Newport’s major exports to the Caribbean were horses, lumber, beef, pork, candles, cheese, and wool. Heavy imports of sugar and molasses were needed for the growing production of rum. Newport’s Jewish merchants possessed a special advantage in the Caribbean trade. Most of them had close and reliable contacts in the extensive Jewish mercantile communities of Jamaica, Curacao, and Suriname. Later, when the Newport Jews were attempting to gather enough funds to build a synagogue, their Caribbean friends were most generous.

With the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1755, Newport’s illicit trade once again became trade with the enemy. A parliamentary act of 1756 declared, to no avail, that “a trade closed in time of peace could not be opened in war.” In 1757 the Rhode Island legislature passed an act forbidding trade with the enemy. Nevertheless, Rhode Island merchants continued to trade with the French islands, and within one year the 1757 act was repealed. Although most merchants supported the English cause, trade was their primary concern, and they needed French molasses, sugar, and rum. Consequently, Rhode Islanders continued to follow the same general course of trade as they had in peace, adjusting it somewhat to fit into a war situation. Merchants involved in the West Indies trade coveted French prisoners. Ships returning prisoners to French ports were entitled to fly the flags of truce, which enabled them easily to smuggle cargo in and out of the French West Indies. In 1758 Henry Collins, a Newport trader, was accused of buying and selling French prisoners for the use of merchantshippers. During the course of the war John and William Tweedy, the firm of Richards and Coddington, Joseph Wanton, and others engaged in the purchase and sale of flag truce permits. One prominent merchant, Christopher Champlin, sent out at least ten vessels to enemy ports from 1758 to 1760 alone.

By 1760 Newport had become a notable port, dispatching more ships than New York. Rhode Island’s merchant marine, which was primarily centered in Newport, consisted of 184 vessels in addition to 342 small coasters. The town had more than twenty distilleries, and more than half of the merchant marine was engaged in the triangular rum-slave trade. Commercial prosperity, accelerated by the French wars, is reflected in the port’s population growth. In 1780 the population was estimated to be about 4,640. In 1748, at the end of King George’s War, the population had grown by about 2,000 to 6,508. In the peaceful years that followed, the population was increased by only some 200 to 6,753 in 1755. There was another spurt of population growth with
the outbreak of the French and Indian War until by 1760 the population had grown to 7,500.

Rise of Jewish Population

A small part of the population increase is attributable to the Jewish businessmen attracted by Newport's booming shipping industry in the late 1750s and early 1760s. By 1760 there were about twelve Jewish families living in Newport. Ezra Stiles counted fifteen to twenty Jewish families living in Newport in 1764 and about twenty-five families in 1769. The new arrivals in the 1760s were Isaac Elizer; Joshua and Moses Isaacks; Joseph Jacob, Hiam, Moses, and Benjamin Levy; Judah and Moses Michael Hays; Francis, Jacob, and Issachar Polock; Abraham Mendes Pereira; and Isaac Touro. Most of these men were New York businessmen joining other members of their families or independently seeking improved economic opportunities.

In 1770 Stiles estimated the Jewish population at about thirty families. The official census taken by order of the General Assembly on June 1, 1774 indicates that there were about twenty-five Jewish families, amounting to about 200 people in Newport. Stiles's estimate is approximate, and census data are limited in value because the census counted only those who were actually at home at the time the census was taken, and because some Jews declined to be counted for religious reasons. Nevertheless, these figures clearly indicate that the Jewish population reached its peak and remained stable during the first half of the 1770s. At this time about 25 per cent of the Jews in the colonies were living in New England, with virtually all the New England Jews settled in Newport. These Jews constituted about two per cent of Newport's total population but about ten per cent of Newport's substantial merchants.

The New York Jews who came to Newport between 1740 and 1770 were a select group consisting principally of businessmen seeking improved economic opportunities in a developing young port. They also hoped to establish a New England foothold for the North American Jewish trading community. Newport was a more likely choice than Boston because opportunities were limited in the older, established port. Newport was also a likely choice because of its more liberal religious tradition. Newport's tolerant atmosphere attracted a community of Jews from Barbados as early as 1678. There is no indication that any religious difficulties precipitated the dispersal of this original community in 1685.
Although religious reasons may have entered into the decision to settle in Newport as opposed to Boston, it is clear that the Jews did not leave New York in search of religious freedom or improved political opportunities. Most of those who came to Newport had been naturalized in New York. They were freemen of the city, enjoying complete religious freedom and limited political recognition. In Newport the Jews, although free to worship as they chose, faced political restrictions. The Rhode Island courts denied naturalization to Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizer in 1763. Lopez, one of Newport's most prominent citizens, temporarily established residence in Massachusetts in order to become a naturalized Englishman. Once naturalized, he returned to Rhode Island to pursue his business interests.

**Preeminent Families**

During the 1760s five Jewish families attained a position of pre-eminence in the Newport commercial community. They were the Lopez, Rivera, Levy, Hart and Polock families. Aaron Lopez, who was to become the wealthiest and most successful of all the Jewish merchants, was involved in many new ventures during the 1760s. Although he was heavily in debt most of the time, his courage and ingenuity, combined with the patience and fortitude of his creditors, eventually led him to colossal success. Aaron worked closely with his brother Moses until 1867. After Moses's death, Aaron was frequently allied with his father-in-law, the prominent and powerful merchant, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera.

Isaac Hart was another prominent merchant and a major contributor to the construction of the synagogue. Hart, one of the more successful privateers, frequently combined with his brothers, particularly Naphtali. Naphtali realized a substantial profit selling clothing to the British army. Occasionally the Harts combined forces with Benjamin and Moses Levy, members of another successful family. Myer Polock, a prominent shipbuilder and trader did not move from New York to Newport until the late 1760s. Polock's immediate success drew Moses Michael Hays from New York to join him in the shipbuilding industry. All of these men were leaders not only in the Jewish community, but also in the larger merchant community. All of them, but Lopez particularly, helped to create Newport's "Golden Age" of commerce, just prior to the Revolution.

Not all of the Jews who were drawn to Newport in the 1750s and 1760s received the financial rewards they expected. Bruce Bigelow claims that, despite the apparent boom atmosphere during the French and Indian War, privateering ventures were a failure for most Rhode
Islanders. Newport vessels were frequently captured by English and French privateers and men of war. Merchants shared the risks of these voyages by providing insurance for each other. Eighteen assurers, including Issachar Polock, insured a voyage by Christopher Champlin in January of 1759. Those captains who succeeded in reaching French ports frequently found the markets glutted and had to sell their goods at a low price. Newport’s population and commerce had grown during the war years, but the profits were concentrated in the hands of a few of the more ingenious and venturesome traders.

The end of the war aggravated Rhode Island’s economic problems. The colony had always been bothered by a shortage of hard money. Rhode Island’s severely limited hinterland and lack of important staple products meant that the colony had few items to export for cash. One object of the West Indian trade was to obtain enough money to pay for English manufactured goods. The shortage of hard money made it almost impossible to maintain the value of paper money in the colony. In 1740 the Rhode Island legislature had attempted to correct the impossible inflation of its “Old Tenor” by issuing “New Tenor” lawful money which was to be issued sparingly to prevent depreciation. During the war the issue of “New Tenor” was greatly increased as the colony was forced to help finance the war. By the end of the war the colony was accumulating a debt and experiencing a further depreciation in values. In 1774 the courts made an attempt to stabilize the monetary situation by fixing the ratio of Old Tenor to lawful money, or New Tenor. This band-aid measure did little to stem the tide of post-war inflation.

**Economic Decline**

The “Sugar” Act of 1764 was an additional blow to the postwar economy. This measure, which replaced the weakly enforced Molasses Act, lowered the duty on foreign molasses to an enforceable level. It also raised the tariff on refined sugar and put a tax on certain textiles, wines, coffee, and pimentos, unless these were shipped to the colonies via England. Serious attempts to enforce this new measure cut into the major source of supply for the molasses and sugar needed in the production of rum. There were more than twenty distilleries in Newport alone, and rum was one of New England’s major exports. An angry and determined British ministry was making it virtually impossible for Rhode Island merchants to obtain the hard cash needed to purchase essential manufactured goods from England. The Rhode Island General Assembly in the Remonstrance of January 1764 informed
the Board of Trade that the colony could not continue to exist without the foreign West Indian trade. Meanwhile the large number of merchants petitioning for insolvency in 1764 bears witness to the unsettled state of the colony's economy.

On March 26, 1764, the Newport Mercury carried the following notice:

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

Benjamin, an Hungarian who had arrived in New York about 1758 and in Newport about 1761, was the only Jew to declare bankruptcy during the difficult decade of the 1760s. It is probable that he arrived in Newport with very little capital, since in 1761, shortly after his arrival, he was employed as steward for the newly organized Jewish social club. After Benjamin's business failure, members of the Jewish community rallied to his support. In accordance with a long-standing Jewish concern for the needy in their own community, members of the congregation employed him as shammes (semen) and shohet (ritual slaughterer) of the new synagogue. All of the other Jewish merchants survived this difficult period financially, and some became quite successful.

**Aaron Lopez**

Perhaps the best way to gain an understanding of the activities of the Jewish merchants in Newport of the 1760s is to take a closer look at the early career of Aaron Lopez, the most successful of them all. More is known about Lopez than most of the other Jews, not only because of his preeminence, but also because of the vast quantity of his business records which is still preserved in the vaults of the Newport Historical Society. Lopez brought his wife, daughter, and brother directly from Portugal to Newport in 1752. Aaron's brother Moses had emigrated to New York around 1730. After naturalization and some success as a New York merchant, Moses moved his family to Newport. By the time Aaron had arrived in Newport, Moses was a member of Newport's two-year-old Redwood Library Company, had been exempted from civil duties and personal taxes in recognition of his service translating Spanish documents for the colony's administration, and had been granted a ten-year monopoly in the manufacturing of potash. Moses
was in a position to help his twenty-one-year-old brother begin his business career.

The generosity of some Jewish merchants in New York enabled Aaron to establish himself in business as a shop-keeper almost immediately. Aaron received liberal credit for the purchase of goods for his local retail business. He quickly built his small local business into a large-scale retail and wholesale trade involving shipments throughout the colonies and abroad. His success entitled him to be recognized as a merchant, a man of consequence in eighteenth-century America. In order to earn the title of merchant a businessman had to be more than a retailer or small wholesaler. A merchant traded in bulk at a distance, and his business was regional, interprovincial, and even transatlantic. By 1755 Aaron Lopez was already an established merchant, buying and selling throughout Rhode Island, and exchanging goods with agents in Boston and New York.

Lopez's trading interests were diverse, but he was particularly interested in the spermaceti candle trade. Spermaceti is the waxlike substance extracted from the headmatter of the sperm whale. Abraham Rodriguez Rivera, Lopez's future father-in-law, supposedly brought the secrets of the manufacture of spermaceti candles from Portugal. The first colonial candle manufactory was built by a man named Benjamin Crabb in Rehoboth, Massachusetts. When the original building was destroyed by fire, Obadiah Brown of Providence built a new plant and hired Crabb as manager. Brown's success inspired Aaron Lopez to establish a similar plant in Newport in 1756. By 1760 there were 12 similar factories in New England, although only three or four were needed to process all the spermaceti supplied by the whalemen. Demand for head matter far exceeded the limited supply, and whalemen were able to command high prices for their product.

THE SPERMACETI TRUST

In an attempt to exercise some control over the cost of the raw material, the spermaceti candle manufacturers formed one of America's first trusts. On November 5, 1761 the United Company of Spermaceti Chandlers was established to control the cost and distribution of head matter. Nine firms signed the agreement. Two of the first firms were completely Jewish (Naphtali Hart & Co and Aaron Lopez and Company) and one was a partnership of a Jew and a non-Jew (Collins and Rivera). The agreement was less than nine months old when the above-mentioned firms complained that some of the trust members had violated the articles of agreement by purchasing head matter at ex-
ccessive prices. In a letter to Richard Cranch of Boston, the founder of the trust, they complained:

We have certain information that most of the Factors at Nantucket have procur'd all the Head Matt'r they possibly cou'd, at an advanc'd price . . . we have Reason to believe they have no other Method to dispose of it, but to their former Employers. . . . We have frankly told them our Opinion, that this is a manifest Breach of the Articles.  

Despite their dissatisfaction with the functioning of the agreement, these critics joined in the renewal and expansion of the organization in April, 1764. The new agreement stipulated that every hundred barrels of North American head matter was to be apportioned as follows: Nicholas Brown & Co., twenty barrels; Joseph Palmer and Co., fourteen; Thomas Robinson and Company, thirteen; Aaron Lopez, eleven, Jacob Rivera and Company, eleven; Isaac Stelle and Company, nine; Naphthali Hart and Company, nine; 'the Philadelphians', seven; Edward Langdon and Son, four; and Moses Lopez, two. Jacob Rodriguez Rivera assumed a position of leadership in attempting to enforce the new agreement. In 1769, when it became apparent that the price agreement was being violated, Rodriguez wrote to William Rotch of Nantucket. He asked for Rotch's assistance in identifying the guilty purchaser, claiming that, "I cannot persuade myself, its for any of the Manufacturers of the Contract, and if it was, its very Necessary they should be pointed out . . ." Rivera also wrote to Nicholas Brown in Providence proposing action against those who "have joined together, in order, if possible, to raise the price." Rivera was a respected leader, but he could not force the association to maintain a ceiling on the price of head matter. After 1769 the number of manufacturers more than doubled, placing an additional strain on the limited supply of head matter. In 1774 there were twenty-four manufactories, thirteen in Newport alone.  

It is obvious from the 1763 allotment of head matter that Aaron Lopez was a major manufacturer. Only three firms had larger allotments than Aaron's eleven per cent proportion, and only Rivera was allotted as much. As a merchant seeking to expand his trade, Lopez was constantly in quest of goods for export. Until years later, when the market became glutted, candles were an excellent commodity for exchange. During the early and middle 1760s invoices for candles always appeared in his coastwise shipping to ports like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charlestown. His sales of spermaceti candles amounted to 3,150 pounds local (non-sterling) currency in the month of February 1763 alone.
The Guinea Trade

Until about 1765 Lopez was primarily interested in coastal shipping to American ports and traded mainly in spermaceti. However, in 1763 he also became interested in transatlantic trade. Transatlantic ventures required greater capital investments than the young Lopez could afford. After Aaron's marriage to the daughter of Jacob Rodriguez Rivera in 1763, Lopez and Rivera frequently pooled their resources to finance long voyages. In the next few years they sent a ship to Lisbon, one to the Canary Islands, and several others to join in the African slave trade. Lopez and Rivera were neither the first nor the only Newport Jews to engage in the slave trade. In October of 1762 Isaac Elizer and his partner Samuel Moses sent the sloop Prince George to Africa to pick up slaves for sale in the Bahamas. Lopez and Rivera dispatched their first ship to Africa in the same year. The brigantine Greyhound brought 134 Negroes from the Guinea coast to Charlestown, South Carolina. Two years later the sloop Spry exchanged a cargo consisting primarily of rum for a shipload of Negroes to be delivered to Jamaica. The following year two more of their vessels made the triangular trip from Newport to the Guinea coast and Jamaica. Lopez and Rivera had discovered a good source of bills of exchange on England. Undisturbed by the moral issues involved in the slave trade, they continued to underwrite about two African voyages each year until 1776.

Although he explored new opportunities, Lopez was still primarily concerned with the colonial coastal trade in the early 1760s. The Sugar Act and the subsequent failure of merchants engaged in the West Indian trade discouraged his interest in the Caribbean trade. He made a few exploratory ventures in the transatlantic London trade, but feared becoming heavily indebted to a London mercantile firm. Then Lopez and Henry Cruger, a merchant in Bristol, England, concluded that American merchants were incurring debts because the London market was saturated with American goods and the prices the Americans received for their exports couldn't pay for their imports. Lopez and Cruger decided to tap the unexplored Bristol market, and Cruger agreed to furnish Lopez with the capital necessary to build this trade.

In 1765 Lopez began to construct new ships to be sold in England with their cargoes. Cruger agreed to obtain insurance for the vessels and to allow Lopez to draw bills of exchange on him even before the ships left Newport. He also arranged to provide Lopez with English goods on twelve month credit. According to Bruce Bigelow, sending five ventures to a new port at a time of postwar depression was one of the most daring plans Lopez ever followed. This may be true, but
it was a far more daring venture for Cruger, who was financing the entire adventure. Neither man anticipated the Stamp Act and the power of the Americans’ threats of non-importation. As a result of the depression in England, the vessels and many of the goods sent to Bristol either remained unsold or sold for very low prices. The venture was a failure for Lopez and a disaster for Cruger. By 1767 Lopez owed Cruger more than 10,000 pounds sterling and was continuing to draw bills of exchange on him in accordance with their original agreement. Cruger plaintively wrote Lopez, “If I am not paid, how can I pay?”—but to no avail. In March of 1768 the debt exceeded 11,000 pounds sterling, and Cruger wrote:

To get money by the execution of orders is my business, but yet I must pay some attention to the reproaches of people whom I cannot pay in a reasonable time. . . . For these considerations forgive me, sir, for not executing your orders. The balance of your account must be reduced before I can be happy. . . .

A less creative and persevering businessman might have succumbed to the burden of such a heavy debt. Instead, Lopez sought new markets where he could acquire the hard cash needed to pay off his debt. Anxious to recoup his losses Cruger helped Lopez to establish himself in the West Indies trade. Unfortunately Lopez initially sent his incompetent young son-in-law Abraham Mendes to act as his factor in Jamaica. It was only after Mendes had been replaced by a more reliable factor that Lopez’s Jamaica trade began to realize a profit. Gradually Lopez extricated himself from his financial difficulties and emerged as one of the most successful merchants in Newport.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The financial difficulties experienced by Aaron Lopez during the 1760s were typical of those suffered by the entire merchant community. His ability to survive the difficulties, recoup his losses, and prosper was unique. By 1772 a number of prominent Jewish merchants had failed. On September 3, 1770 Nathaniel Wheatley wrote the firm of Hays and Polock:

It was with great pleasure I see yours of 8 June last, as you then seemed to have great desire to make a speedy settlement . . . but from your late silence, I have reason to think you intend to put off the payment until I shall recover it in the Law.

On September 30, 1771 Hays and Polock petitioned for insolvency. Their petition was granted on September 30, 1771. Moses Michael Hays opened a small shop when he was released from debtors prison.
In later years, after the Revolution, Hays re-established himself as a merchant in Boston.

The insolvency petition of Isaac Elizer was granted in December 1771, and that of Naphtali and Isaac Hart was granted in January 1772. The combined tax lists for 1772 and 1775 indicate that few Jewish merchants were prospering. Of the twenty-seven names listed, nineteen paid rates under 2 pounds, and three of them paid rates between 2 pounds and 5 pounds. Moses Levy paid 6.18.3 pounds, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera 9.4.4 pounds, and Jacob Polock 10.3.0 pounds. The only Jewish merchant whose tax rate indicated true prosperity was Aaron Lopez, who paid $2.9.10 pounds, the highest tax rate in Newport. However, his success was unique, and clearly this was not a Golden Age for everyone.

Bruce Bigelow, the first and only person to make a comprehensive study of Newport's commerce prior to the American Revolution, called the period between the Peace of Paris (1763) and the opening of the American Revolution the "Golden Period" in Rhode Island trade. Bigelow admitted that from 1764 to 1768 the commercial situation was somewhat dull. It was in fact seriously depressed, with most businessmen struggling for survival. Bigelow stated that after 1768 there was a definite boom in Newport's commercial activities, as evidenced by a considerable increase in shipping, new slave markets in the Carolinas and Virginia, a new West Indies frontier in Hispaniola, and the development of a Rhode Island whaling industry. Undoubtedly, business conditions did improve after 1768, but many businessmen were still in serious financial difficulties. Even Aaron Lopez had not yet begun to extricate himself from his heavy debts. It is false and misleading to label the years prior to 1769 as "golden".

**Recovery**

Economic conditions began to improve significantly in 1769. The late James B. Hedges, noted historian of the Brown family of Providence, observed that from 1769 to 1775, the Rhode Island economy experienced a "gradual recovery from the postwar depression of the sixties, from the stagnation which the Sugar Act had accentuated, and from the monetary stringency of the early years. The early seventies were years of relative political tranquillity, and economic prosperity." By the end of 1769 Newport's population had expanded to more than 11,000. The port had nearly 200 vessels engaged in foreign commerce and some 300 to 400 craft engaged in domestic trade. Most evidence supports Bigelow's contention that this was truly Newport's Golden
Age. However, even in this apparently Golden Age the insolvency petitions continued to appear. Some businessmen never recovered from the postwar depression. Poverty and failure in the midst of prosperity and success argues against easy generalizations about this unstable prerevolutionary era. Bigelow's work broke important new ground. What is needed is a more complete and up-to-date study of the commerce of this period. Before generalizations can be made, a careful study, including the use of shipping invoices, the abundant existing business records, tax lists, and insolvency notices, must be undertaken. Meanwhile, it is wise to avoid references to Newport's Golden Age.

WIDESPREAD ACTIVITIES OF LOPEZ

Aaron Lopez was one of the Newport merchants who enjoyed enormous prosperity during the early 1770s. By 1774 he had completely paid off his debt to Henry Cruger, although he still owed some money to his London agents, Hayley and Hopkins. The secret of his success lay in the diversity of his activities. Although he became deeply involved in the West Indies trade, he continued to pursue the coastal trade and transatlantic voyages. His specialty was, not whaling, candles, Caribbean traffic, or transoceanic commerce, but "business as a genre." By 1772 he was becoming an industrialist as well as a shipper. As a manufacturer he produced spermaceti candles, ships, rum, freshly ground chocolate, and wooden barrels. In addition, he contracted for the production of textiles, clothing, shoes, hats, bottles, sulkies, and even prefabricated bungalows. By 1774 he had an interest in more than thirty vessels, and his commerce was sufficiently diversified so that a set-back in one quarter did not mean complete failure.

Lopez and his fellow Newport merchants occasionally prospered at the expense of merchants in other colonies. In 1769 Rhode Island and New Hampshire were the only colonies that failed to use non-importation as a weapon in opposing British trade regulations. Even after a Providence town meeting pledged not to import or purchase British goods, the merchants of Newport remained indifferent. Newport reluctantly agreed to participate only after the Merchant's Committee at Philadelphia threatened to discontinue trade with the port. After the partial repeal of the Townshend duties, Newport prematurely repudiated the non-importation agreements and resumed trade with England. Angered by the Newport merchants' willingness to profit from the distress and self-sacrifice of their neighbors, eight provinces placed a temporary embargo upon Newport. This time Newport merchants reluctantly participated in non-importation until the total repeal of the Townshend Act of 1770.
The "Continental Association", organized in 1774 to prevent any kind of economic intercourse with England, forced compliance. Local committees in all the colonies supported the Association and used every means of persuasion to enforce the boycott. The enforcement of the boycott drastically reduced Newport's trade. The Newport committee wrote to Philadelphia in 1775: "So far as we can learn the Association hath been strictly adhered to by the merchants of this colony." Undoubtedly, as the business papers of Aaron Lopez attest, there were some violations of the boycott. However, its general success severely harmed Newport's economy.

**BRITISH OCCUPATION**

As Bruce Bigelow accurately observed, 1775 was the "beginning of the town's commercial death, as it was also the beginning of the end for many Newport merchant houses. . . . Business had come almost to a standstill, and money was tight in Newport, Jamaica, and London." By October of 1775 the British fleet was moored in full view of Newport's harbor. Trade was devastated, and people lived in fear of imminent destruction. Large-scale evacuation had begun, and in November the legislature appropriated 200 pounds to help the poor people leave and to assist those who were forced to remain under adverse conditions. By December 8, 1776, when the British troops landed in Newport with little opposition, most people loyal to the colonial cause had fled. The city's population dropped from 11,000 in 1775 to 5,299 in 1776 in anticipation of the occupation. Those who remained were indifferent, incapacitated, or Loyalist.

Aaron Lopez moved his business to Portsmouth, Rhode Island early in 1776 and then to Providence after the occupation. In the summer of 1777 he again moved, this time to Boston, and then finally to Leicester, Massachusetts, to a spot, "where I could place my family secured from sudden allarms and the cruel ravages of an enraged enemy . . . (and move) in the same Sphere of Business I have been used to follow, which, altho much more contracted, it has fully answered my wishes. . . ." The Lopez family was joined in Leicester by the families of Jacob Rod. Rivera and Abraham Mendes. Lopez set up a shop in Leicester and did some shipping from Salem and Boston. Much of his time was spent in traveling, trying to straighten out his tangled accounts and attempting to free those of his vessels that had been seized by American cruisers. Lopez's losses as a result of the war were monumental. Nevertheless, he persevered in his business. Had he not accidentally drowned in 1782, he undoubtedly would have returned to Newport and attempted to rebuild his trading empire.
The census of 1782 indicates the presence of only six Jewish families in Newport. Those listed are Moses Isaacks, Abigail Polock, Moses Seixas, Moses Levy, Isaac Elizer, and Jacob Isaacks. The Lopez, Rivera, and Mendes families were still in Leicester. The Hart brothers remained in Newport during the British occupation but were forced to flee because of their Loyalist activities when the British withdrew in 1780. Isaac Hart was shot by Continental soldiers while seeking refuge on Long Island. Benjamin Meyer died in 1776, and his Loyalist wife fled to New York in 1780. Meyer Polock was dead, but his widow Abigail remained on the census rolls. Moses Michael Hays fled to South Kingstown, Rhode Island with the British occupation, returned briefly to Newport in 1780, and then settled in Boston.

Postwar Depression

The town rates for July 31, 1783 indicate the continuing presence of all of those Jews counted in the 1782 census, in addition to Abraham Mendes and the Lopez families. In spite of the postwar depression the most prominent merchant in Newport paid a tax of 4,000 pounds. The two most prosperous Jews were Moses Levy and Joseph Lopez, who each paid taxes of 15,000 pounds. The state tax rate for June 1786 indicates that Jacob Rod. Rivera returned to Newport and was again in business. The firm of Rivera, Seixas and Co. was assessed 2,500 pounds. The only other Jew paying substantial taxes was Joseph Lopez, who paid 2,800 pounds as compared to Christopher Champlin’s 3,000 pounds.

Those merchants who attempted to restore Newport’s commercial prosperity after the revolution were severely handicapped. According to one observer, William Ellery, when the British left Newport five hundred buildings had been burned and considerable property carried off. Ellery estimated the damage at 124,798 pounds and noted that in his absence “All the destructible property I had there was utterly destroyed.” Joseph Hadfield, a British visitor to Newport observed in 1785 that as a result of the “devastations of war . . . the poverty of the inhabitants will be an insuperable barrier at least for some time.” Merchants attempting to restore trade were not only faced with the complete destruction of the Long Wharf, including most of their warehouses and stores, but also the loss of most of Newport’s merchant fleet. Hadfield observed only twenty vessels in the foreign trade and thirty additional small vessels in the coastal trade. This fleet was smaller than those owned by each of the great merchants.
prior to the war. Hadfield noted: “The trade of Newport is not great. There are few persons of consequence in the mercantile line here.”

Merchants in post-revolutionary America were forced to realize that the nature of trade had changed. Those merchants who attempted to cling to the old trade routes and the old products failed. They found that much of the West Indian trade was closed to them by new British laws restricting foreign trade with their islands. Merchants who attempted to resume large importations of British manufactured goods soon found themselves heavily in debt to British mercantile firms. Foreign ships carried most of America's imports and exports. The future belonged to merchant families like the Browns of Providence, who realized that the way to prosperity involved increased American manufacturing. Manufactured goods were needed for domestic use and for export to help pay for imports. Merchants creative enough to find new markets, such as China, prospered. Before the old merchants learned to survive in this new economic world and won government protection for American trade, most of them suffered severely. The merchants and shipowners of Baltimore expressed a common grievance when in 1789 they complained that:

for want of national protection and encouragement, our shipping that great source of strength and riches, has fallen into decay and involved thousands in the utmost distress.

NEWPORT ECLIPSED BY PROVIDENCE

In the 1780s Newport merchants were suffering the effects of the postwar depression of trade while attempting to overcome the great property losses they had experienced during the British occupation. Newport's postwar recovery problems were aggravated by the increasing competition from Providence merchants. By 1775 the Browns of Providence had become the peers of the Newport businessmen and were beginning to overtake some areas of Newport's trade. While Newport was suffering from the British occupation, the Providence merchants were able to solidify their control of Rhode Island commerce. Once Providence merchants gained commercial control of the Rhode Island hinterland, Newport was forever doomed to a secondary position in Rhode Island trade. Geographically, Newport, located on the tip of an island well removed from most of the mainland of Rhode Island, could never have remained a major trading post once overland trade routes were improved. However, the fact that Newport was destined to play a lesser role than Providence does not mean that the port was doomed to immediate and total eclipse.
Attempts were made to restore Newport's commerce. Christopher Champlin returned immediately after the war and revived his trade with London, Lisbon, Dunkirk, Dublin, and Amsterdam. Joseph Lopez and Jacob Rodriguez Rivera restored some of their transatlantic and West Indian trade, and Moses Seixas engaged in some trade with the West Indies. It is evident that there was a limited post-revolutionary resurgence of trade in Newport. A study of furniture shipments from Newport indicates that commerce resumed on a more limited basis after the war. Although there were a few transatlantic voyages and occasional trips to the West Indies, most of the trade was with domestic coastal ports. The bulk of the furniture was shipped to New York. Much work remains to be done in the study of public documents and private business records before the extent of this commercial revival can be determined. In the absence of sufficient studies of the problem, it appears that the revival of Newport's trade was hampered by the absence of the kind of creative bold leadership exercised by Aaron Lopez in the 1770s. One can only speculate upon the possibility that Aaron Lopez would have found new markets and expanded his manufacturing interests if he were in Newport in the 1780s. Although Lopez could not have reversed Newport's secondary position in the Rhode Island economy, he might have brought about a temporary resurgence of commercial prosperity. This was still the age of the individual entrepreneur. Lopez was largely responsible for Newport's prosperity in the 1770s, and the Browns were responsible for the ascent of Providence. Perhaps Aaron Lopez's presence in postwar Newport would have made a difference.

Decline of Newport

By the mid 1780s it was apparent, despite Newport's limited trade revival, that better business opportunities were available elsewhere. All of the younger ambitious members of the Lopez family left Newport for New York and Boston prior to 1790. Jacob Rodriguez Rivera was old and tired. He continued to trade from Newport until his death in 1789. Gradually, the remaining Jews of the younger generation drifted off to New York, Boston, and Charleston, seeking new opportunities. The 1790 census list shows seven Jewish families remaining in Newport. These were the families of Abigail Polock, Jacob Isaacks, Sarah Lopez (Aaron's widow), Judah Hillel, Moses Seixas, and Isaac Elizer. Jacob Isaacks died in Newport in 1798. Judah Hillel left in 1790, and Isaac Elizer left about the same time. Moses Seixas died in Newport in 1809. In 1822 Moses Lopez, the last remaining Jew in Newport, left for New York.
The Jewish Merchants of Newport

The Jews drawn to Newport in the middle of the eighteenth century were a select group lured by the prospects for economic expansion. Newport's commercial growth preceded their arrival. Although the Jewish community cannot be credited with Newport's prosperity, a few members of the community did help to accelerate the port's economic growth while fulfilling their own economic aspirations. The majority of the Jewish traders, however, met with only marginal success or failure.

After the Revolution, when it became apparent that Newport's economic opportunities had narrowed, the younger members of the Jewish community as well as many non-Jews scattered in search of greener pastures. The businessmen who left Newport were victims of the port's commercial decline. The absence of the Jewish merchant community was a very minor factor in the ultimate eclipse of Newport. If Aaron Lopez had lived, he might have stimulated a temporary revival. However, no amount of individual entrepreneurial activity could have altered the fact that Newport would never again be a major seaport.

NOTES

4 Ibid.
6 Ibid., Part I, Chapter V, p. 4.
10 Marcus, p. 635.
11 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VI, p. 24.
12 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VI, pp. 25-27.
13 Bridenbaugh, p. 67.
14 Ibid.
15 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VI, p. 28.
16 Chyet, p. 67.
17 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter V, p. 5.
18 Bridenbaugh, p. 216.
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes

30

Ibid.


24 Marcus, p. 392.

25 Ibid., p. 549.

26 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VI, pp. 62-64.


28 Ibid.

29 Bigelow, Chapter VII, pp. 4-6.


31 Newport Mercury, March 26, 1764.


33 Chyet, pp. 21-22.

34 Hedges, p. 89.

35 Chyet, p. 44.


37 Broches, p. 18.

38 Ibid., p. 54.

39 Hedges, p. 112.

40 Chyet, p. 51.

41 Ibid., p. 64.

42 Ibid., p. 67.

43 Ibid., pp. 84-85.

44 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VII, p. 17.

45 Chyet, p. 88.


47 Newport Mercury, September 30, 1771 and May 11, 1772.

48 Jacob R. Marcus, Early American Jewry, p. 154.

49 Newport Mercury, May 11, 1772.

50 Ibid., January 7, 1772.

51 Broches, p. 75.


53 Hedges, p. 114.

54 Arnold, p. 300.

55 Chyet, p. 122.

56 Ibid., p. 128.


58 Bigelow, Part I, Chapter VII, p. 50.

59 Arnold, p. 300.

60 Bridenbaugh, p. 216.

The Jewish Merchants of Newport

Census Records of the State of Rhode Island for 1782. Typed from Original Manuscript, Rhode Island Historical Society.

Newport taxes, town rate, July 31, 1783, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Rhode Island Historical Society.

Ibid., Town Rate, June 1785.


Ibid., p. 217.


Hedges, p. xviii.


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THE JEWS' SYNAGOGUE IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
IN 1759

BY REVEREND ANDREW BURNABY

This town is situated upon a small island, about twelve miles in length, and five or six in breadth, called Rhode Island, from whence the province takes its name. It is the capital city, and contains about 800, or 1000 houses, chiefly built of wood; and 6 or 7000 inhabitants. There are few buildings in it worthy of notice. The court-house is indeed handsome, and of brick; and there is a public library, built in the form of a Grecian temple, by no means inelegant. It is of the Doric order, and has a portico in front with four pillars, supporting a pediment; but the whole is spoilt by two small wings, which are annexed to it. . . . The places of public worship, except the Jews synagogue, are all of wood; and not one of them is worth looking at. They consist chiefly of a church, two presbyterian meeting-houses, one quakers ditto, three anabaptists ditto, one Moravian ditto, and the synagogue above-mentioned. This building was designed, as indeed were several of the others, by a Mr. Harrison, an ingenious English gentleman who lives here. It will be extremely elegant within when completed: but the outside is totally spoilt by a school, which the Jews insisted on having annexed to it for the education of their children.

. . . The government of this province is entirely democratical; every officer, except the collector of the customs, being appointed, I believe, either immediately by the people, or by the general assembly. . . . There is no established form of religion here; but church of England men, independents, quakers, anabaptists, Moravians, Jews, and all other sects whatever, have liberty to exercise their several professions. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sends only four missionaries.

NOTE

Extracted from Pictures of Rhode Island in the Past by Travelers and Observers. Ed. by Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, Providence, R. I., Preston and Rounds Co., 1900, pp. 56-59. Ms. Kimball gave the following background information:

"Burnaby (1734-1812) was an English clergyman, who made extended journeys in America, chiefly in the Middle States, in 1759 and 1760.

"His observations show good judgment and are interesting. He is careful to avoid any allusion to the political events of the time. The extract given is taken from his Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America, p. 67 et seq. London, 1775."
THE JEWS IN LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
by Emory Washburn

I

Perhaps no more proper connection than the present* will present itself in which to introduce an interesting episode in the history of the town,—the residence here, for some years, of several families of Jews. It has not, however, any thing properly to do with the ecclesiastical affairs of the town; though these families brought with them, and scrupulously maintained while here, their peculiar forms of faith and worship.

They came here from Newport, in 1777, to find a refuge from the invasion of the island by the British troops, as did several other families from the same neighborhood; this being regarded a retired and healthy locality, where they might find a safe and hospitable retreat. I have heard the late venerable Thomas Rotch, jun., of New Bedford,—whose wife, then a young woman, had removed with her family from Newport to Leicester,—speak with an interest, which nearly seventy years had not subdued, of the character of the town for hospitality and public spirit during the period of which I am speaking, and during which he more than once visited it. He spoke in terms of affectionate recollection of families with whom he then became acquainted, whose names, even, have now become matters of history only; but to some of whom I shall have occasion to allude again, when I come to speak of the general history of the town.

Including their servants and slaves, of whom I have spoken in another place, the number of persons embraced in these families of Jews was about seventy. They were of Portuguese descent, as might be inferred from their names,—Lopez, Rivera, and Mendez.

Abraham Mendez lived, a part of the time, in the house opposite to where Mrs. Samuel Newhall now lives; and a part of the time in the old house which stood at the foot of the Meeting-house Hill, where the house of the late Capt. Joshua Sprague now stands.

Jacob Rod Rivera lived in the house, which forms a part of the Hotel, opposite the Meeting-house.** He purchased this estate, consisting of thirty-one acres of land, of Nathan Waite, in September, 1777; and, in his deed, is described as a merchant.

*As part of the ecclesiastical history of the town, written in 1860. Ed.
**Washburn wrote elsewhere (pp. 168-169): "The house opposite the Meeting-house, which was long kept as a hotel, was built for that purpose by Nathan Waite in 1776. The following year, he removed to the place where he afterwards lived and sold the estate to Jacob Rivera. Mr. Rivera traded there until his removal to Newport in 1783." Ed.
Five of the number bore the name of Lopez. The principal and head of the families of this name was Aaron Lopez, a man universally esteemed and respected by a wide circle of personal and business friends. He was a merchant of great wealth, and engaged extensively in trade while he resided in Leicester. He purchased the estate, afterwards occupied by the [Leicester] Academy, of Henry Bass of Boston, and Joseph Allen, Esq., of Leicester, Feb. 1, 1777; and erected thereon what was called in that day “a large and elegant mansion,” designed for a store as well as a dwelling-house. His stock of goods on hand, at the time of his death, exceeded twelve thousand dollars; while his entire estate was valued at more than a hundred thousand dollars.

I give the boundaries of his estate, which are described in his deed, as partly depicting the condition then of that portion of the village. It is said to be “on the north side of the Country Road, eastward of and near to the Meeting-house: bounded southerly by the Country Road, six rods; eastwardly, to a heap of stones; then by the land of the Rev. Benjamin Conklin, &c., to a heap of stones on a rock; then turning, &c., to a stake, and heap of stones, by the lane leading from the Meeting-house to the remains of a house formerly possessed by Israel Parsons, deceased; from thence bounded westerly by said lane in part, and partly by the training-field, to the south-east corner of the place whereon the old schoolhouse stood,—and containeth half an acre by measure, together with a dwelling-house and shop situate thereon.” He afterwards added a half-acre adjoining it, upon the east; and these two constituted the estate which Col. Crafts and Col. Jacob Davis afterwards purchased, and gave to the Academy.

Mr. Lopez also owned other lands in Leicester; but none of these families engaged in agriculture as a business. Mendez and Rivera, as well as Aaron Lopez, were traders, though to a much smaller extent. Moses Lopez and Jacob Lopez were clerks of Aaron; as well as Joseph, his son, who was also a member of his family.

Though without a place of assembling for worship here, they rigidly observed the rites and requirements of their own laws, keeping Saturday as holy time; but, out of regard to the sentiments of the people among whom they were settled, carefully keeping their stores closed from Friday evening until Monday morning of each week.*

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*I cannot forbear noticing a very small, though rather important, typographical mistake of the printer, in publishing a brief history of the town in 1826. The writer had spoken of the return of these families of Jews to Newport, and of their synagogue there being unoccupied, &c. By some accident, the “t” was dropped from the word there, so as to fix the locality of the synagogue “here;” and inquiries have often been made by the curious to ascertain in what part of Leicester it was to be found.
Though differing from their neighbors in matters of religious faith, they won the confidence and esteem of all by their upright and honorable dealing, the kindliness and courtesy of their intercourse, and the liberality and public spirit which they evinced as citizens.

They remained here until the ratification of peace in 1783; when, with the exception of Mr. Lopez, they returned to Newport, carrying with them the respect and kind regard of a community with which they had been intimately associated for six years.

No one of their contemporaries here survives; but their residence was always spoken of, by such as had personally known them, as a matter of pleasant memory, which it is believed was reciprocated by those who had found here a pleasant home.*

The fate of Mr. Aaron Lopez was a melancholy one. I have spoken of him as a man of wealth and liberal views. He had been one of the merchant-princes of Newport, when that city commanded the foreign commerce of the country. After his removal to Leicester, his style of living was generous and hospitable; and the furniture of his house, the plate upon his table, and the retinue of his servants, wore an air of magnificence among his less-endowed neighbors: but the cordiality of his manners and his liberal hospitality disarmed all cavil and envy of their part.

On the 20th May, 1782, he started with his wife and some members of his family for Providence. His family were in a carriage; he in a "sulky," driven, of course, by himself. In Smithfield [Rhode Island], the road passed close by the edge of Scott's Pond, so called, the shore of which is very abrupt, and the water, at a short distance, deep. Mr. Lopez, probably being unaware of the fact, allowed his horse to enter the water in order to drink; but, perceiving he was getting beyond his depth, sprung from the sulky into the water, and, being unable to swim, sank and perished, in view of his agonized and affrighted wife and children.

The following just tribute I copy from a paper of the day; which, after noticing the circumstances of his death, adds, "He was a merchant of eminence, of polite and amiable manners. Hospitality and benevolence were his true characteristics. An ornament and a valuable pillar in the Jewish society of which he was a member. His knowledge in commerce was unbounded; and his integrity, irreproachable. Thus he lived, and thus he died; much regretted, esteemed, and loved by all."

*Mr. Rivera died at Newport in February, 1789.
Leicester Academy owes its origin to the efforts and generosity of Ebenezer Crafts, of Sturbridge, and Jacob Davis, of Charlton... Neither of them had local pride to gratify, or property to enhance in value by selecting Leicester as the seat of such an institution.

The object they had at heart was to found an academy. Its locality became rather a matter of favorable accident than any original design on their part.

The conception of such a work, as well as the first steps towards accomplishing it, belonged to Colonel Crafts.... Various plans for effecting this purpose suggested themselves to his mind. At one time, he thought seriously of attempting to establish an academy in Sturbridge, where he resided. But the need of suitable buildings, and the original expense of erecting such, seemed to offer an impediment to the enterprise too serious for him to surmount.

While his mind was thus exercised how to accomplish the plan he had conceived, the death of Aaron Lopez, and the removal of the families of Jews from Leicester, to which place they had resorted from Newport to escape the hostilities which the English waged upon that town, opened to Colonel Crafts the means of carrying forward his favorite scheme.

Mr. Lopez was one of the merchant princes of his day. He was, at one time, extensively engaged in commerce, and possessed of great wealth. He was distinguished for hospitality and benevolence, and his fine gentlemanly manners, united with a character of irreproachable integrity, secured him the respect and esteem of all who knew him.*

His place of business before the Revolution had been Newport, then the commercial emporium of New England. In the summer of 1777, I believe, he, together with several other families of Jews, removed to Leicester, where they purchased and occupied estates, and Mr. Lopez resumed, to a limited extent, his mercantile pursuits.

*The inventory of his estate shows a property of nearly $100,000, including a stock in trade of more than $12,000, and indicating, by the character of the furniture, and family stores on hand, a style of living not common, at that day, in the country.
To accommodate these, and to provide for his family a suitable residence, he erected what was then regarded as a spacious and commodious dwelling-house, containing a large centre room for the purposes of a store. I shall have occasion to speak more particularly of this estate in another connection.

On the 20th day of May, 1782, Mr. Lopez started, with his family, to visit Providence, they in a carriage, and himself in a gig drawn by one horse. In passing Scott's pond, in Smithfield, on his way, he drove his horse into the water, as was supposed, to drink; when, by some means he got beyond his depth, upset the gig, and Mr. Lopez was drowned in the very presence of his family, who could render him no assistance.

This circumstance, together with the return of peace, induced these families to return to Newport, leaving, however, among the inhabitants of Leicester, a grateful remembrance of their residence here, which was cordially reciprocated.

This train of events rendered it necessary to sell the estate of Mr. Lopez, and the same was offered at auction. Colonel Crafts regarded it as a favorable opportunity to obtain a suitable building for an academy upon reasonable terms, and proposed to Colonel Davis to join with him in the purchase.

There had not, however, been any previous concert between them, nor had the idea of purchasing the estate occurred to either, till they came together on the day of the sale, with great numbers of people from the neighboring towns, which the occasion attracted.

Colonel Davis, at once, came into the views of Colonel Crafts, and the estate was bid off to Colonel Crafts, Colonel Davis, and Asa Sprague, for the sum of five hundred and fifteen pounds. . . .

The original deed of the estate bears date May 7th, 1783, and, on the fourth of July following, Colonel Crafts, with his accustomed energy and promptness, commenced proceedings which resulted in the accomplishment of his original design.

He addressed a petition to the legislature, of which the following is a copy:

To the Honorable, etc.: The Petition of Ebenezer Crafts, of Sturbridge, in the county of Worcester, humbly sheweth, that he, the said Ebenezer, together with Jacob Davis, of Charlton, Esquire, and Asa Sprague, of Spencer, Gentleman, both in said
The Jews in Leicester, Massachusetts

county, some time in the month of April last past, purchased a large and commodious building, with about one acre of land, late the property of Aaron Lopez, deceased, lying and being in the town of Leicester, in the county, etc., with intent and design to promote the public benefit in the education of youth, as the said buildings are exceedingly well calculated for an academy. . . .

July 4th, 1783.

EBENEZER CRAFTS.

In the Spy of the 6th November, 1783, it was announced that "there would soon be opened at Leicester an academy for the purpose of promoting the sciences, etc." . . .

It was further stated, that "This academy will be opened in that large and elegant house lately occupied by Mr. Aaron Lopez, a situation peculiarly advantageous for this purpose." . . .

. . . on the 23d March, 1784, a bill for incorporating the academy was passed [by the Legislature].

The preamble to the act recites the views of the legislature, and the circumstances under which the act was passed:

Whereas the encouragement of literature in the rising generation has ever been considered, by the wise and good, as an object worthy of the most serious attention, as the safety and happiness of a free people ultimately depend upon the advantages arising from a pious, virtuous and liberal education: Whereas it appears that Ebenezer Crafts, of Sturbridge, in the county of Worcester, and Jacob Davis, of Charlton, in said county, Esquires, for the purpose of promoting piety and learning, have generously given the large and commodious house, lands and appurtenances, in Leicester, lately occupied by Aaron Lopez, deceased. . . .

In order to compare with the standard of our own day, what was so often spoken of as the "large and elegant structure,"—"the large and commodious mansion house," which was thus dedicated to the purposes of an academy, I shall endeavor to describe, partly from recollection and partly from the information of others, its dimensions and position.

The house was two stories high, having six rooms upon the lower story, three in front, and three in rear. The middle room in front had been used by Mr. Lopez, for a store room, and occupied more space in length, than the other two rooms in the south-east and south-west corners of the house. It stood near the road fronting toward the south, and was surmounted by a kind of cupola, in which hung a bell, the gift, I believe, of Mr. Stickney of Leicester.
Upon the front of the building, were two outer doors, over which were porches, supported by two pillars with corresponding pilasters, to which it had been attempted to give something like architectural proportions though without much success. This was the only attempt at architectural ornament upon the exterior of the building, whose front might have been perhaps seventy-five feet in length. The stories were not probably more than from seven to seven and one-half feet in height. Its windows were made of panes of glass, six by eight inches in size—and its general appearance and effect corresponded with what might be expected in a building of such proportions, devoid of ornament, and thus lighted.

Dr. Pierce, in his address before the academy in 1847, speaks of the appearance of the building in 1793 as follows. "It was an oblong, barrack-looking building, erected by Jews who had migrated from Newport, Rhode Island, and raised this rough looking structure for mercantile uses."

And yet, according to the standard of architectural taste of the day, it was an imposing structure. Mr. Lopez was a man of refined taste, ample fortune and liberal habits; and can hardly be supposed to have intentionally spared any reasonable expense, in constructing a mansion house for himself.

The east and west wings or end of this building remain, having been removed and fitted up as dwelling-houses upon the road leading to Charlton, within the present village of Leicester, and it is only necessary to compare these with the proportions and style of exterior finish of the better class of dwelling-houses of our own day, to judge something of the progress that has been made in the arts, both in respect to convenience and luxury, during the last seventy-five years, in our country.

The building stood in front of the present academy, but more westerly, and close by the road, and, at the time of which I am speaking, there was, I believe, no dwelling-house upon either side of the street east of it, except one occupied by the Rev. Mr. Conklin, which stood upon the site of the house now of the Rev. Mr. May. While towards the west, at the distance of about a dozen rods, stood an old, dilapidated, ill-proportioned meeting-house, with diamond shaped windows, but without either porch or belfry. . . .

NOTE

APPENDIX

On February 3, 1779, Aaron Lopez wrote as follows:

"Since we left our Island [Newport] my principal object was to look out for a spot where I could place my family, secured from sudden alarms and the cruel ravages of an enraged enemy. Such a one I have hitherto found in the small inland township of Leicester, in the Massachusetts Bay, where I pitch'd my tent, erecting a proportionable one to the extent of my numerous family on the sumit of an high healthy hill, where we have experienced the civilities and hospitality of a kind neighbourhood; and moved in the same sphere of business I have been used to follow, which, altho much more contracted, it has fully answer'd my wishes. And you know, my friend, when that is the case, it never fails of constituting real happiness. Add to this the satisfaction of having for a next door neighbour your truly well wishing friend, my father-in-law, Mr. Rivera, who with his family I left in good health, spending in peace the fruits of his last summer's labour on a small farm. The old gentleman [now sixty-two years of age] improves with much the same farming faculties you tell me you cultivate yours, and I can farther inform you that while his hands have been employ'd in that usefull art, his agitated mind has uniformly accompanied yours to poor Newport where I do still hope, we shall soon have the pleasure of meeting each other again and re-enjoy those injur'd habitations, we have so long been deprived of, with all satisfaction.

"By this week's post, Mrs. Lopez has inform'd me that the Widow Lee, who had the liberty of going down from Providence in a flag [of truce] to Newport, after staying there some days, she had the indulgency of returning to Providence, and being engaged to nurse my daughter, Mrs. Mendez (who I have the consolation to tell you leaves [lives] also near me and next door to our good neighbour, Capt. Jno. Lyon, formerly of Newport). This Mrs. Lee, coming directly on her return into our family, inform'd Mrs. Lopez that the poor inhabitants of that town have been very much distress'd this winter for the want of fewell and provisions, those individuals of my society [Jews] in particular, who, she said, had not tasted any meat but once in two months. Fish there was none at this season of the year and they were reduced to the alternative of leaving [living] upon chocolate and coffee. These and many other callamities and insults the wretched inhabitants experience ought to excite our thanks to that Great Being who gave us resolution to exchange at so early a period that melancholy spot for that we now are enjoying."

NOTE

THE 1902 SIT-IN AT TOURO SYNAGOGUE*

by Bernard Kusinitz

Past issues of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes have carried papers by David C. Adelman, Esq. and Judge John C. Burke containing accounts of the break-in at Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island in 1902. However excellent they were, both were limited in scope. In the belief that as much as possible of the story should be told, an attempt will be made to recreate the events of the period within the context of the spirit and prejudices prevailing at that time.

BACKGROUND

Most events of importance have their roots in the past. The events that began in 1899 and climaxed in 1902 at Touro Synagogue were no exception. What happened at that time would make little sense to one without knowledge of the involved factors, of which there were, in fact, four.

First, because patents of incorporation could not be granted in colonial days to religious organizations per se, such groups could not purchase or own real estate, such as a synagogue building, in their own name. The law was circumvented by the Jews of Newport by appointing three individuals to purchase the land, who would then act as trustees for the building and maintenance of the synagogue. While for all practical purposes the land and synagogue belonged to the entire congregation or “Jewish Society”, as Jacob Rodriguez Rivera one of the trustees, wrote in his will of 1787, legally the title to the land and buildings rested with the appointed trustees, who purchased the land as individuals. Upon their death the title passed on to their heirs.

Second, for historical reasons not relevant to the story, Touro Synagogue belonged to and still is the legal property of the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York City, title and trust of the synagogue having been deeded to them by the remaining legal heirs of the synagogue in 1894.

Third, after their deaths in 1822 and 1864 respectively, Abraham and Judah Touro both left money in their wills to be administered by the State of Rhode Island and the city of Newport. They were implemented through several acts of the General Assembly of Rhode

*Adapted from an incomplete manuscript tentatively titled “An Historic Chronology of Touro Synagogue”.

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Island. Abraham's will provided for the maintenance of the building and premises, while Judah's provided for the salary of a minister or reader and for repairing the only Jewish cemetery existing at the time in Newport.

Fourth, one of the several basic problems facing the new congregation, just recently organized in 1893, was a dual matter: which group of individuals was going to control both the congregation and the synagogue building locally and what was the relationship going to be between the New York congregation and the Newport group? In fact, the whole bizarre chain of events that began in 1899 had its origin in what, under other circumstances, would have been a mundane matter of "schul (synagogue) politics." It turned out to be considerably more.

That it was much more than "schul politics" and that a real fission in the congregation had occurred virtually from the beginning is documented by the following communication sent by Reverend David Baruch, the spiritual leader and secretary of the congregation, to the Board of Trustees of Shearith Israel on June 13, 1893:

Two separate bodies had organized at that place, each claiming to exercise authority over the Synagogue and appurtenances, one of which had applied to the legislature for a charter.

CONTEST FOR PHYSICAL POSSESSION

The chain of events that unfolded in the next few years is perhaps unique in the history of this or any other congregation. Beginning as a contest for the physical possession of Touro Synagogue, it contained all the elements of high drama: physical force, emotional personality conflicts, intra-ethnic prejudices, violence, police action, court contests, and much more. Its conclusion has shaped the history of the congregation to the present time. While it lasted, it demonstrated the tremendous vitality, strong leadership, and will to shape its own destiny that characterized the newly revived Jewish community of Newport, a community that was rapidly growing with the influx of new immigrants—adding still another dimension to the struggle. The newcomers had sunk their roots in Newport and were there to stay, unlike other immigrants who had come there during the 1850s.

Moreover, the legal settlement that emerged is responsible for the paradox that was, and still is, Congregation Jeshuat Israel. It settled the question of who would control both the congregation and the synagogue building. It answers the questions of how it is that an
Ashkenazic (Western European) congregation in Newport, Rhode Island is still legally affiliated with a Sephardic (Spanish-Portuguese) congregation in New York City and how a modern Ashkenazic congregation worships according to the ancient Sephardic ritual, using Sephardic prayer books, but until recently with Ashkenazic pronunciation.* It explains why the religious leadership of a synagogue building of Sephardic origin was Ashkenazic beginning with the rabbinate of Jacob Seidel. Finally it answers the somewhat vexing question of how once upon a time the Jews of Newport broke into Touro Synagogue not to vandalize but to pray, thus conducting possibly the first “sit-in” in the country. There is the final ironic touch that it happened under the guidance of a brilliant young Irish lawyer named John C. Burke.

The differences between the “two separate bodies,” referred to by Reverend Baruch in his communication to Congregation Shearith Israel, had apparently been kept under control during his tenure as rabbi and secretary. There was not even a hint of such a rift in the minutes of the congregation of that period except for one entry in a report of a special meeting held on April 26, 1894: “Resignation of I., M., and S. Levy also from Jacob Servadio accepted with regret.” Unfortunately, there is no discussion or explanation offered.

However, if we consider that the affairs of the community between 1883 and 1893 were conducted by a triumvirate consisting of Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes, Maurice Rosen, and Isaac Levy, and for a while Lewis Ginsberg in place of Rosen, and that the first officers of the new congregation in 1893 were Isaac Levy, president; Eugene Schreier, vice-president; and Max Levy, secretary and treasurer, then it must be concluded that the resignation en masse of such leaders as the Levys must be considered significant and possibly an early indication of the more complete rift to follow. And indeed after Reverend Baruch’s death on March 30, 1899, the differences did burst forth like a flame from a smouldering fire, which all but consumed the Newport Jewish community in its intensity. The passions that combined to produce the conflagration fed one upon the other.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Seemingly innocuous to the modern-day American Jew, these differences—religious, personal, and organizational—were real, relevant, and crucial to these newly arrived American Jews. Not only were they

*This continued until June 1969 when Congregation Jeshuat Israel voted to adopt the Sephardic pronunciation to comply with the world-wide trend of following the example set by the State of Israel.
not as yet completely Americanized, but also they had not completely lost their old world values and prejudices. In effect, they were one part American, one part European, and one part Jewish. Sufficient time had not yet passed to reconcile these differences and to convert them to modern American Jews. Unless this is understood, it is difficult for the present-day Jew to realize how seriously the first generation American Jews took their backgrounds and their places of national origin. Their sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, the present-day second, third, and fourth generation American Jews, are largely indifferent as to whether their forebears were Germans (Deutchers), Russians (Rushashas), Polish (Paylishes), Hungarians, Rumanians, Lithuanians (Litvaks), or Latvians or, God forbid, Galitzianers (Galicians)! Depending on one’s viewpoint, each had its own sterling qualities as opposed to unflattering characteristics of the others. Such differences were real, important, and even decisive to these newcomers to the new world and were no less vivid (if not more violent) than the hatred of the nineteenth century southern rebels for the damned Yankees of the north.

So real and passionate were such feelings that they account in part for some of the bitterness that was engendered in the sequence of events that followed. Adding to the fire, the newcomers to town, who were Ashkenazic, found alien the traditional Sephardic minhag, or ritual in use in Touro Synagogue. Finally, add to all this the absentee landlord situation, the control of the Touro Funds by the local and state governments, and the personality conflicts engendered by the “haughty” German, Eugene Schreier, who had become the “agent” of the trustees of Shearith Israel in 1898 and had thus been brought into direct conflict with the less sophisticated mid-Europeans such as the Davids and the Dannins. Adding fuel to the already growing fire, Eugene Schreier, the second president of the new congregation, had established a close working relationship with the parent group in New York in the preceding formative years of the Newport congregation. What other explanation is there for the action taken by the New Yorkers in presenting him with a silver loving cup on the occasion of his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in “appreciation of your services as their representative in Newport”?

*Leo Rosten in his The Joys of Yiddish explains: “The Galitzianer and the Litvak were often at odds, each claiming superiority over, and looking with a certain disdain upon, the other. The respective chauvinists viewed a marriage between a Litvak and a Galitzianer as almost exogamous, and wedding guests were fond of predicting that no good could come of such a strange misalliance.” The German Jews were “a self-appointed elite.”  Ex.
Whatever relationship had developed—whether others in Newport liked it or not—was formalized when Doctor H. Pereira Mendes and N. Taylor Philips went to Newport on Decoration (Memorial) Day 1898 and recorded the following action in the guest book of the synagogue:

The undersigned delegates, this being an official visit, and the first official visit to represent the Congregation Shearith Israel of New York since the official ratification of the relationship existing between the two congregations above mentioned, hereby confirm those ratifications declaring the proprietary rights of the former Congregation Shearith Israel, Spanish and Portuguese, of New York, and that Mr. Eugene Schreier of Newport, Rhode Island, is to act as the representative or agent of said Congregation (Spanish and Portuguese) Shearith Israel of New York, to take charge of the building, appurtenances, or properties, services and cemetery . . . the Synagogue building [situated] in the ancient site in Touro Street and the cemetery at the corner of Kay Street and Bellevue Avenue.

And the undersigned hereby affix their signatures in ratification of the above.

Schreier himself had a year earlier strengthened his position on the occasion of the dedication of Shearith Israel's new synagogue building on 70th Street in New York City, perhaps bidding for support from New York for the older group in its struggle against the newer congregation, which was also attempting to get use of the Touro funds in Newport, and perhaps attempting further to reinforce his own personal relationship. Schreier on that occasion in his most ingratiating manner stated:

The connection of this Congregation with the Congregation Jeshuat Israel worshipping in this Ancient Edifice are such that their interest is one. The descendents (of the 3rd and 4th generation) of the men who helped build this ancient Edifice are now members of the Congregation Shearith Israel, and the unity existing between the two bodies will I trust be an everlasting one. [Punctuation added.]

LEGAL SPLIT

Against this background of human prejudices and weaknesses, the "two separate bodies" which had organized a few years earlier now legally split into two congregations. One, keeping the name and organization of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, was led by Eugene Schreier, excluding such men as L. and H. Hess, Herman Weiner, Julius Engell, E. and L. Davidson, and G. and S. Schuster, among others. The other was led by Israel J. Josephson and Julius Engell, who, together with
The 1902 Sit-in at Touro Synagogue

Barney Wilsker, David Frant, Sigmund Barber, Sigmund Schwartz and Moses Wagner, incorporated on April 10, 1899, under the name of "The Touro Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island for the purpose of religious worship according to the rites of the Jewish religion." Many of the new arrivals in town, such as Nathan Ball, the Dannins, and the Davids, joined the latter group.

The Touro Congregation, being the larger and more influential, won recognition by the Newport City Council, which apparently had one eye on the ballot box. It voted to pay the salary of its Rabbi, Reverend E. M. Meyers, out of the Judah Touro Ministerial Fund, which it administered, rather than that of Reverend Moses Guedalia, the Rabbi of Congregation Jeshuat Israel. Without a doubt the proper and prudent action for the council would have been to seek legal opinion and to avoid entanglement in an issue involving separation of church and state.

Thus began the struggle for physical possession of Touro Synagogue. However, the legal ownership of the synagogue by the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York was not challenged or even questioned until a much later date. At the outset only the matter of rightful and lawful possession was in dispute, this being a technical but highly crucial point of difference in the eyes of the law.

NEW YORK GROUP TAKES ACTION

Congregation Shearith Israel, motivated by its desire to preserve revered traditions, to protect its legal authority over the synagogue which was now being placed in jeopardy, and to support Congregation Jeshuat Israel, the legal successor to the original Congregation Yeshuat Israel, immediately brought suit against the Touro Congregation, charging entry by force and unlawful detention of their property. The ensuing complicated legal maneuvering resulted in several court cases, which ended three-and-one-half years later after it precipitated the famous 1902 break into Touro Synagogue followed by the unprecedented "sit-in".

The first phase of the struggle, as recorded in Volume 31 of the Records of the Appellate Division Supreme Court for Newport County, took the form of a complaint sworn to by L. Napoleon Levy, one of the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel, in an action of Forcible Entry and Detainer, an ancient legal proceeding to determine rightful possession of a given premise without settling the right of legal title or ownership. The action, taken on June 9, 1899, was instituted by
attorney James Tillinghast acting for L. Napoleon Levy, David De Meza, Anthony Wallach, Edgar J. Nathan, Henry Belais, Alfred Lyons, Albert J. Elias, and N. Taylor Philips, and members of the New York congregation. They alleged entry by force and unlawful detention of their property and asked for relief. The action was taken against the Touro Congregation and the following individuals: Julius Engel, David Frant, Albert Goddard, Charles Dannin, Moses Wagner, Abraham Solomon, Sigmund Barber, Max Levy, Nathan Dannin, Michael Bassin, Jacob Heller, Charles Heller, Israel J. Josephson, Baruch Corn, Isaac Levy, Esy Schwartz, Louis Dannin, Abraham Siegal, Sigmund Schwartz, Joseph Dannin, and Moritz Adler.

The defendants through their attorney filed a demurrer, a legal plea admitting the alleged facts, but asking in effect, “What of it”? They argued that the plaintiffs were not in actual and peaceful possession. The judge overruled the local group. Although the decision was of tremendous importance, the details of the trial were in themselves of no great importance. They are nevertheless interesting for two reasons: First, they reveal something of the contempt in which the Schreiers held the men of the Touro Congregation; and second, they expose a peculiar error made by the Court and also by David C. Adelman in his 1958 account of that phase of the proceedings.

It is stated that three witnesses testified for the complainants; that one of them was Henry Osborn, “a colored man”; that Eugene Schreier and his son Alfred “affirmed” that Eugene Schreier testified that “a mob” came towards him with tools as if to strike him, howling like a “Wild West Show”; and that Schreier named half a dozen of them, one of whom protested and was quieted by the sheriff. Next, a witness was asked about a Sullivan Schwartz. The court then asked that the person answering to that name stand up for identification. Three men arose and seemed to be identified, but afterwards it was said none of them was “Sullivan Schwartz.” Of course, no Sullivan Schwartz could stand up because there is absolutely no contemporary evidence to substantiate the existence of such a person. There is the possibility that the name was a misreading, for example, of Sigmund Schwartz, one of the defendants in the case. Of particular interest to Newporters, however, was the observation made by Adelman that the largest clan in Newport was the Sullivans and that “it is interesting to note that as far back as 1899, one of them was a Jew.” What a shame that this ecumenical observation was based on an error in fact!

Be that as it may, Alfred Schreier, secretary of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, testified that after Levy’s men went away the synagogue was
relocked, but that the next day "the mob came in like a flock of sheep from all sides and threats and attempts were made but no striking done." He stated that "his father withdrew from the mob and he couldn't tell whether or not he liked the Levys."

The testimony of one Osborn, a watchman, was interrupted by a sudden recess, and, fortunately, the conciliatory attitude of the New Yorkers prevailed. The question at issue was not that of rightful legal title to the synagogue, but of rightful and lawful possession. Counsel for both sides agreed upon a written verdict which was signed by all of the jurors and which found that the complainants were entitled to speedy possession. To that end a writ of execution was signed by Judge W. W. Douglas of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, dated July 10, 1899, and delivered to "the Office of the Sheriff or his Deputy of Newport County."

**SUPREME COURT DEGREE**

Because this decree of the Supreme Court became the legal ground on which the New York trustees depended in their continuing controversy with the Newport congregation over the possession of Touro Synagogue, the decree is presented in full as it appeared in the contemporary press of Newport:

I. S. The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Newport, S.C.

To the Sheriff of our County of Newport or his Deputy:

Greeting:

Whereas at a Court of Inquiry of forcible entry and detainer holden at the city of Newport in our county of Newport upon the tenth day of July in the year 1899 before one of the Justices of the Supreme Court, the jurors impanelled and sworn by our said justice did return their verdict in writing signed by each of them that the complainants, L. Napoleon Levy, David De Maza, Anthony Wallach, Edgar J. Nathan, Henry Belais, Alfred Lyons, Albert J. Elias, and N. Taylor Phillips were upon the Eighth Day of June 1899 in the rightful possession of a certain messuage or tract of land in the city of Newport bounded and described as follows, to wit:

Southerly on Touro Street 92 46-100 feet, Easterly on land of the Newport Historical Society 109 8-10 feet, Northerly on Barney Street 90 65-100 feet and westerly on land of George P. Lawton being that lot of land wherein the building known as the Jewish Synagogue stands, together with said Jewish Synagogue building thereon, and that the defendants, Julius Engel, David Frant, Albert Goddard, Charles Dannin, Moses Wagner, Max Levy, Nettin Dannin, Abraham Sigel, Sigmund Schwartz, M. Bassin, Jacob
Heller, Charles Heller, Israel J. Josephson, Baruch Coren, Isaac Levy, Esy Schwartz, Max Schwartz, Louis Dannin, Joseph Dannin, and the Touro Congregation of Newport upon the same day did unlawfully with force and arms and with a strong hand enter forcibly into the same, and did unlawfully with force and a strong hand hold and keep out the said complainants herebefore named and that they do still continue wrongfully to detain possession from the said complainants. Whereupon it was considered by our said justice that the said complainants should have restitution of the same we command you that, taking with you the power of the county, if necessary, you cause the said defendants, and each of them, to be forthwith removed from the premises and the said complainants to have peaceful possession of the same.

And make return of this writ, and your doings thereon, within twenty days next coming.

Given under my hand and seal the tenth day of July in the year 1899.

Wm. W. Douglas
Justice of the Supreme Court

At 5:45 P.M. of the same day Deputy Sheriff Hugh Gifford complied with the writ as follows:

Newport, S.C.

I have this tenth day of July A.D. 1899 at 5:45 o'clock P.M. caused the within named defendants and each of them to be removed from the within described premises, and I have put the within named L. Napoleon Levy, complainant, in peacable possession of the same and I have delivered to him the said Levy, the keys of the said premises, and I hereby return the within execution as wholly satisfied.

Hugh N. Gifford
Deputy Sheriff

The question of legal ownership was left in abeyance, and both local groups joined in worship in the synagogue. As testimony to this we find that in the May 1901 election the following individuals were chosen officers of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel: President, Julius Engle; Vice-President, Moses Wagner; Secretary, Sigmund Barber; Treasurer, Sigmund Schwartz; and two of the trustees, Joseph Josephson and Fischel David. Most of these men were from the Touro Congregation and were among the defendants in the 1899 court action. Although by all rights the whole matter should have been resolved then and there, the pot continued to boil. New elements and new characters entered the picture, aggravating the situation. Another series of events beginning in January of 1901 caused the members of Congregation
Jeshuat Israel to realize that Eugene Schreier and Shearith Israel were antagonists to Jeshuat Israel as well as to the Touro Congregation.

Looking at the situation in another way, in addition to the hostilities between the Touro group and the New York congregation, as evidenced by the "revolt" of the Newporters against the New York landlords, friction also developed between Eugene Schreier, the agent of the New Yorkers, and his own Congregation Jeshuat Israel. In other words, a "civil war" was being fought within the ranks of one congregation while the revolt was taking place between the other Newport group and the third party in New York.

Civil War

Two separate elements seemed to make up the "civil war". On the one hand there was the friction between Schreier and his congregation, Jeshuat Israel. On the other, any action taken by the trustees of Shearith Israel to close the synagogue to the Touro Congregation also closed it to the original Congregation Jeshuat Israel. The climax of this "sub-plot" was still another court case having nothing to do with those instituted by Congregation Shearith Israel.

As evidence of the friction between Schreier and Congregation Jeshuat Israel, the following notice signed by Congregation Jeshuat Israel appeared in the January 8, 1901 edition of the Newport Daily News:

Eugene Schreier, no longer being an officer in or having any authority to approve bills contracted in the name of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel, all persons are hereby warned that the said Congregation will not pay any bills so approved.

This elicited a reply from Schreier in the same newspaper, in which he states that he did not claim to have any authority either to contract or approve bills for the congregation and that he did not attend their meetings and was ignorant of their proceedings. After pointing out that the bylaws of the congregation provided that all bills must be passed upon by the board of trustees before they could be paid and that the board alone had the right to contract bills, and, since he was not a member of the board, he failed to see the necessity of publishing the above notice, particularly since he hadn't held any office for nearly one year. He then proclaimed that any bills presented in his name were a forgery and that the notice was a libel. He signed his letter "Guardian of the Touro Jewish Synagogue."
CLOSING OF THE SYNAGOGUE

Indeed, feelings had to be high to warrant such a heated exchange in the public eye. In this climate of personal hostility, the closing of the synagogue followed in January of 1901, and a further incident immediately arose out of the closing, an account of which follows.

Various books and articles on Touro Synagogue mention the several gifts made to the synagogue during its initial period of revival, including a Torah, a Scroll of the Law, in 1901 by Leonard Lewisohn of New York City. While not a descendant of any of the founders of the synagogue, as was mistakenly reported by Rabbi Morris Gutstein, he nevertheless came from a most interesting background. He was, indeed, a member of the Lewisohn family, the Lewisohn's of "Our Crowd," of "The One Hundred" as they called themselves, or of the "Jewish Grand Dukes", the famous Jewish families which came to New York during the 1848 immigration wave.

The occasion of the gift was the marriage of Lewisohn's daughter, Lillian, in Touro Synagogue on March 22, 1900, a wedding important enough to be listed in the summary of the year's outstanding events as published by the *Newport Journal and Weekly News* on March 19 and March 24, 1900. The affair was referred to as "a fashionable wedding" that "will take place at the Touro Synagogue, the fifth that was ever celebrated in that ancient edifice." The reporter in referring to the wedding as the fifth to take place in Touro Synagogue may or may not have been accurate, but that is incidental to our story. According to the Synagogue's guest book, the ceremony was performed by Reverend Morais, the local rabbi, and by the famous Reverend Stephen Wise, who was brought from New York to participate. Morais performed the major part of the ceremony, with Wise giving the closing prayer and benediction.

Lewisohn's very generous gift, unfortunately, produced more complexities than at first appeared likely. Undoubtedly it was never intended to cause the trouble that subsequently ensued. For the donation was not an actual Torah, but rather was in the form of a thousand dollar donation—for the benefit of the congregation to be used at the discretion of its incumbent president, Eugene Schreier. The rabbi recommended that a new scroll be purchased to replace one that was nearly worn out. Part of the money was then used to purchase the scroll, which was dedicated during the Feast of Passover. Later the congregation asked for a written statement from Schreier indicating that the scroll was the property of the congregation. He replied that, since
they had the scroll, no such paper was necessary. Finally, he did present a paper which stated that the scroll was for their use as long as they worshipped in the synagogue. This they refused to accept. When the synagogue was closed by orders from New York, the congregation brought a replevin case in February of 1901 to obtain possession of the scroll. The scroll, of course, was locked up in the synagogue while all the congregants were locked out! The hearing of the evidence, the attempts to rattle opposing witnesses, and the sparring of the two lawyers, Nolan for the complainants and Sheffield for the defense, lasted for about an hour-and-a-half. The court decided in favor of the defendant, Schreier.

TRUCE SHORT-LIVED

In the meantime the truce between the two local congregations turned out to be short-lived. The Jewish community was growing larger in numbers, including such names as the David brothers, Fischel, Israel, Moses, and Nathan. They were representative of a new and dynamic element in the community, with minds and prejudices of their own. The synagogue had been closed in 1898 and part of 1899, and again from January 1901 to April 21, 1902, the latter time because of the friction between Eugene Schreier, the representative of the trustees of the New York congregation and the members of the Touro Congregation. This phase of the drama began in January of 1901 and laid the groundwork for the famous sit-in episode beginning in April of 1902.

The complicated story unfolds with the publication in the Newport Daily News, January 1, 1901, of the following apparently innocuous but starkly laconic notice. Perhaps at another time, under other circumstances, and with less controversial names this notice might have precipitated very little, or at least another type of reaction. But coming at this time under the combination of circumstances then existing, it only served as a catalyst for what eventually followed:

NOTICE!

The Synagogue on Touro Street will remain closed until further notice by order of L. Napoleon Levy, Trustee, and for the owners of the property.

Eugene Schreier
Agent for the Trustees and Owners
The scene shifts next to the chambers of the city hall of Newport, where a routine resolution was presented to the city council directing the city treasurer to pay the salary of the “minister of the Jews' Synagogue” on approval of the president of the congregation. However, the city treasurer, Ward by name, moved to refer the resolution to the finance committee. President Engel and Max Levy appeared before the Committee speaking in favor of the original resolution and Eugene Schreier in opposition. After a lively hearing it was decided to ask the city solicitor's opinion in regard to the city's position, since it was noted that the synagogue was closed and there was in consequence no minister to pay. Undoubtedly this was the proper procedure, which the council should have adopted from the first. When the council took the part of one congregation as against the other, it did so in violation of the principle of separation of church and state. Such an action should have been challenged by the offended party. However, the following events can be related to the council's decision.

**To Appoint Minister**

Just as every action brings a reaction, this move by the council, apparently backed by the city solicitor, brought the following reply from the New York trustees, which speaks for itself:

Congregation Shearith Israel in the city of New York, New York
March 12, 1901

To the Honorable The City Council Newport, R. I.

Gentlemen: We have received a copy of the resolutions of your body passed March 5, 1901 relative to the payment of salary of Jewish Minister in your city. As owner of the synagogue property we are anxious that it be opened and services held there regularly for the benefit of the entire Jewish community of Newport. Your resolution stipulates that the salary shall be paid upon the certificate of the president of the congregation. No congregation having any control over or in fact anything to do with the synagogue edifice, and in consequence no power to appoint a minister to officiate therein or approve a certificate of his services, you will observe that it is impossible for the terms of your resolution ever to be complied with.

We think it proper to advise you that we are ready to appoint a minister to officiate in the synagogue, provided you amend your resolution so that his salary can be paid upon his own certificate of services rendered in the same manner as was done for many years by the late Rev. A. P. Mendes, who received his appointment at our hands. You will perceive that should this not be done, and we in consequence be obliged to keep the synagogue closed this will of course prevent any clergyman from officiating.
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therein, and as your resolution will become impossible of execu-
tion the Jewish residents of Newport will in consequence be de-
prived of sacred services. We earnestly trust that you will not
make this necessary.

Very respectfully yours,
L. Napoleon Levy
For the Owners

As reasonable and legally correct as this letter was, at least on the
surface, it nevertheless was read with disdain by some of the local
residents. In fact, it elicited the following response in the form of a
letter to the editor of the Daily News. Just as the position and feelings
of the New York congregation are expressed in the above communi-
cation, the following letter explains the feelings and motivation of
those Newporters who sought to determine their own religious destiny:

To the Editor of the News:

After reading the copy of the communication addressed to the
City Council over the signature of L. Napoleon Levy, it forcibly
impressed itself upon my mind that the misstatements therein con-
tained and the deceit which is being attempted to be practiced
upon the City Council and the citizens in general should not be
permitted to pass without a challenge. It is only too well realized
by those in position to appreciate the facts that the fatherly and
religious concern expressed by the writer of the communication,
backed and encouraged by some local influence, is a farce, and
that this solicitude is but of the length, depth and breadth of
a $30,000 fund which the State of Rhode Island holds in trust
for the Hebrew residents of Newport. I venture the statement that
with the dissipation of this fund all this solicitude and apprehen-
sion for the religious, mental, and physical welfare of the Hebrews
of Newport will disappear also. It is to preserve the fund and to
prevent its dissipation and absorption by individuals that the He-
brew residents of this city are making their stand.

Regarding the ownership of the synagogue proper, the citizens
of Newport will know it has always been considered a public place
of worship and the City Council of Newport has exercised control
over it up to the present time, the city treasurer of the city of
Newport being in fact the keeper of it and responsible to the
State of Rhode Island for its preservation, and it is a shame to
close the building and in this land of liberty and religious tolera-
tion prevent those who so desire from entering this place of
worship and appealing and praying to their God for His blessings
and beneficence. The Hebrews of Newport are firm in their con-
viction that there is not a particle of real title in this party and his
colleagues. Their boast is and has been that with their immense
wealth they will “squeeze the life out of the people” here and
gain their end; but they reckon without their host, for the Hebrews
The Hebrews worshipping in this synagogue have for the past 20 years elected their own minister. Dr. Mendes was their choice, after his death came Dr. Baruch, and then the present incumbent, Dr. Morais; and a reference to the resolutions of the City Council will show that in every case such resolutions have the clause that the minister should be paid his salary upon approval of the president of the local body. The Hebrews of Newport claim the right to govern themselves free from dictation from within or without, the right to select their own minister, and the right as beneficiaries under the Touro Funds to know where the funds are going and who is receiving it. Why have others such a desire to have a minister of their own selection, and to draw the salary without a voucher for the performance of the duties required of him? The Hebrews of Newport know well among themselves the purport of the whole matter and it is their desire, hope, wish and prayer that the City Council of Newport will protect their interests by throwing a safeguard around the fund and permit the resolution to remain as it now is.

It is beyond legal controversy that, even granting for the sake of argument that the so called owners have a legal right, the ministerial fund is an independent matter, and is connected with the building in no way. We claim the building to be public property. The city of Newport has always recognized it so for no taxes have been levied upon it; the city treasurer is keeper, a public fund maintains it in repair, and by all reasonable argument a church was never built as yet for one man worship.

Take the ammunition away from the gunner and you hear no more from him; keep the funds away from certain men and they will disappear.

Very Respectfully
A Hebrew

Newport, March 15, 1901

In this trying period, with accusations and recriminations being hurled back and forth, life nevertheless went on. The Touro Congregation, still desirous of conducting services on a regular basis, conducted them in the home of Nathan Ball on Coddington Street off the upper end of Thames Street. Ball served in the capacity of reader. He had already been commissioned the city “shohet”, or ritual slaughterer, so that the Jews of Newport would no longer have to take turns in going to Fall River via public transportation to purchase kosher meat for the entire group.

Events rapidly moved toward a climax when Fischel David took the step which culminated in that colorful drama at Touro Synagogue that no one could foresee.
BURKE ENGAGED AS ATTORNEY

After consulting the leading attorneys in the area about opening the synagogue to all Newport Jews and being informed that the situation was such that nothing could be done, David, in a last desperate move, turned to a young Irish lawyer who had been practicing in Newport for only three years. Before his career ended, several decades later, he achieved not only local, but also statewide fame as a brilliant lawyer with a keen mind possessed of a vast knowledge of the law beyond most practitioners. John C. Burke, later Judge Burke, even at this early stage in his career displayed his knowledge, his ability, his daring tactics and his desire to win—even in a hopeless case such as the one posed by the men of the Touro Congregation.3

Just as he found a little known statute which enabled Dennis Roberts to retain his office as governor of Rhode Island in the controversial 1956 gubernatorial election, so fifty-five years before that episode he had discovered an obscure state law by which his clients could take action. Being completely unfamiliar with the historical background of both the synagogue itself and the events of 1899 culminating in the litigation of 1899, he asked for a week or two to look into the matter. As a result of his research, he discovered a state law which provided that anyone interfering with a religious gathering while it was in progress would be guilty of a misdemeanor, a breach of law, thus prohibiting police interference with the assembly. Having concluded that there was no means or method by which his clients could go to court to get relief, he decided that the only workable strategy was for the Touro Congregation to force their way into the synagogue on a Jewish holiday and conduct a religious service continuously with a rabbi in charge in the pulpit. Burke reasoned that the police would have no right to interfere with their possession of the synagogue.

Behind this bold plan was Burke's theory that "the Jewish society" to whom Jacob Rodriguez Rivera had willed the synagogue as a "place of public worship forever" was indeed the Jewish people of Newport, that the Deed of Trust of 1894 by which the heirs of Rivera, Levy, and Hart deeded the synagogue over to the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel was without force and effect, and that the synagogue was built in the first place by voluntary contributions. In short, Burke now intended to do what the Newport Jews previously fell short of doing. He intended to challenge Congregation Shearith Israel's legal ownership of the synagogue building itself. This he intended to do by trying the question of legal title in a court of equity, a court that held jurisdiction over trust estates. But first the main drama itself!
When Fischel David resumed his conference with Burke, he informed Burke upon questioning that the next Jewish holiday would be the Feast of Passover on Monday evening April 21, 1902. Burke then unfolded the plan that David was to follow. With the help of others he was to go to the synagogue at sundown with sledge hammer and chisel, break the locks of both the gate and the synagogue, enter, light the candles, and begin the service after calling in members of the congregation who would be standing by, but hidden out of sight. Burke’s plan called for the services to be conducted by a rabbi. There was no rabbi or cantor in Newport at the time. Whether or not Burke had been told of this situation, the fact was that religious services under Jewish law need not be conducted by a minister, but could be directed by any knowledgeable layman. Fortunately the congregation had at least one such person. It may well have been Isaac Levy, although there is no documentation to confirm this.

In order to ensure the success of the plan in advance, Burke had discussed the matter fully with Assistant Attorney General Charles H. Stearns. Burke informed him of the basic facts of the situation—that the synagogue was closed, that the state of Rhode Island was trustee for one fund and the city of Newport for another, that the synagogue had been closed for a number of years, and that there was no way of getting into the synagogue other than through the plan he had devised. He informed him that he had advised his clients to break in and to start their services. If they conducted the services in a normal religious manner, he believed that the police would have no right to interfere with them. Burke then asked Stearns whether, if he advised his clients to break into the synagogue and no breach of the peace occurred, he, Stearns, would stand behind the persons who went in and see to it that there would be no police action against them. Stearns agreed to go along with the plan as long as there was no breach of the peace.

Burke had likewise consulted the Chief of Police of Newport, Benjamin Richards, who also agreed to cooperate by standing by at the station. Thus, after being assured by Burke that, although something important was going to happen on a certain evening, it would not involve the Chief in a political matter and that he wanted him there in case anything was done by the police that was unauthorized.

Since the true events that transpired Monday evening April 21, 1902 have become distorted or clouded by the passage of time, it was somewhat difficult at first to ascertain what actually happened. It was necessary to separate truth from bubbajmysas (old wives’ tales), fact from fiction. The difficulties have been heightened because none of
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the participants is alive and some of the stories they handed down are either false or have been altered beyond recognition. Contrary to these stories the following is an attempt at reconstruction in accordance with police records, reports in the contemporary press, and those oral accounts which are not inconsistent with reliable written records, such as Judge Burke's written recollections.

**Break-In**

Fischel David did indeed go to the synagogue at approximately 6:00 P.M. with one Hugo Riddell, did indeed break open the gate and door locks with chisel and sledge hammer, did indeed enter the synagogue and did indeed attempt to light the candles. However, having been seen by one Morton Chase, who reported the break-in to one Officer Dugan, David was prevented from proceeding with the rest of the plan. Officer Dugan, instead of notifying City Treasurer Hammett, the official keeper of the synagogue by vote of the City Council, notified instead Eugene Schreier, because of the 1899 Supreme Court decree. Schreier, remember, was now the agent of Congregation Shearith Israel. Schreier, accompanied by his daughter Sarah, entered the synagogue and immediately attempted to prevent David from lighting the candles amidst much talking and milling about by the thirty odd people who were reportedly inside the building, not all of whom were Jews, according to the local press. This number appears to be a realistic estimate. Nathan Ball in his written recollections states very specifically that both the Congregation Jeshuat Israel and the Touro Congregation forced open the Touro Synagogue for the Passover service, and membership of both groups was very small during this period. Officer Dugan was still outside waiting for something to happen, it being fairly obvious that passions were about to explode. The explosion finally occurred when David, a very volatile man to begin with, tired of being nagged and interfered with by the Schreiers, proceeded to tackle Schreier in effective football fashion! This, of course, created even greater excitement.

In the meantime, Officer Dugan was reinforced by the arrival of the police patrol with Sergeant Scott and Officers Esleeck and Easton. They immediately cleared the synagogue and the grounds. They arrested Fischel David, who, acting under instructions to resist arrest, bit Officer Dugan on the hand, and Hugo Riddell, who, after being put out of the synagogue, was on the sidewalk trying to incite the crowd to reenter the building. They were taken to the police station, but were released on their own recognizance. A new lock in the mean-
time was put on the gate about 7:15 P.M. and all went home, although it may be said that the natives were indeed restless during the night!

**RIOT CALL**

John Burke, in the meantime, had heard the riot call in the form of bells ringing and had headed for the synagogue on his bicycle. He arrived just as the police were clearing the synagogue of all the worshippers upon Schreier's complaint. Burke then went to the police station to see the Chief of Police, who had not made himself available according to their agreement. Burke spoke to Captain Garnett who was in charge, explaining that the Attorney General had been in on the whole plan and had agreed to defend the action as long as there was no breach of the peace. The police had been informed by Eugene Schreier that those who had occupied the synagogue should be removed because they had no right to go in and that they might steal the Sacred Scroll.

Garnett, who had been forewarned by Burke that for every Jew who would be arrested two would be prepared to take his place, explained in the meantime to the many Hebrews who came down to the station, that he knew nothing of the merits and demerits of the case, that the police acted only to keep the peace, and that the time and place for talk would be before Judge Baker in the morning. Incidentally, it is quite possible that the voluntary presence of so many of the congregation at the station, many of whom were in and out during the night, gave rise to one of the myths arising out of this whole episode: that many of them had actually been arrested.

Counsellor Burke, in the meantime, had called Attorney General Stearns on the telephone informing him of the situation. Stearns, in turn, explained to the Captain that he had no authority to interfere with men in their performance of a religious gathering and that he would not defend him, and if he persisted he would be subject to prosecution under civil arrest. Civil arrest is an action by which a citizen wrongfully arrested by a policeman could in turn have the policeman arrested in a private suit against the officer.

**WARRANTS SWORN**

The next morning Chief Richards appeared before the court at the station. About 9:30 A.M., after much confusion and arguing back and forth, four warrants were finally sworn out. The first two were against Fischel David. One was for malicious mischief in destroying the locks,
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the property of Congregation Shearith Israel, and forcing the doors open. The other was for assault on Officer Dugan. The third was against Hugo Riddell for reveling or disorderly conduct. The fourth was against Eugene Schreier for assault on Max Wasserman. Schreier in turn, tried to get a warrant for assault upon his daughter, but the court refused, stating that it had enough warrants already to sift and would wait until it could determine where things stood.

After Chiefs Richards had sworn out the warrants, Counsellor Burke suggested that the police had acted improperly and asked if the arrests could prevent the people from worshipping in the synagogue. The court in turn suggested that that question was not before it. Burke further contended that the whole matter was purely one for civil action, that the Schreiers had disturbed a place of worship, and that the police had forcibly evicted worshipers, which they had no right to do. Judge Baker replied that the matter of police interference was not before him and that he never refused the Chief of Police when he demanded a warrant.

The whole episode had taken about an hour. About forty people had crowded into the small court at the police station. Passions still ran high, and threats of vengeance were heard, although cooler heads seemed to prevail. The cases against the men, all of whom had pleaded not guilty, were continued to a later date after one Ernst Voight provided surety.

Sit-In

In the meantime the “rebels”, still determined to carry out the original plan of occupation, once again advanced upon the synagogue on Tuesday afternoon about two o’clock. Two men jumped the fence, again chopped off the lock, reentered the building, and once again prepared to hold services. They were joined by approximately fifty or sixty people who came in singly or in groups, and they remained for the duration! This time there was no disturbance, no police action, no excitement—despite the fact that the police had been notified that Nathan Ball had warned Schreier that his group would return in the morning and that he Schreier had better not interfere.

The police declined to interfere upon Schreier’s request unless there was a definite breach of the peace. This was disclosed by Chief Richards, who had been seen by some of the Jewish women who had not eaten since Monday afternoon and were determined not to eat until they had attended services! Was this perhaps the first public
use of the threat of a hunger strike as a method of achieving a political objective?

Schreier's family had been seen in the vicinity of the synagogue, but he himself had left. However, he had a bicycle scout in the area, who brought him reports of what was going on. L. Napoleon Levy on behalf of his fellow trustees appealed to Mayor Boyle of Newport and later to Governor Kimball of Rhode Island to intervene. The appeal asked that the New York group be put in possession of the synagogue, as was directed by the courts in 1899. However, neither they nor the police, acting on the advice of Assistant Attorney General Greenough, would interfere.

Because there appear to be no written records extant covering the subject and because of the various unsubstantiated claims of many people, it is difficult at this late date to determine exactly who actually participated in the "sit-in" night and day until the matter was settled. One version, which appears to have some merit, is told by the children of one of the alleged participants, Nathan Dannin. He told his children that he, Chone Dannin, their cousin Samuel Horowitz, Fischel David, David Rosen, and their wives slept in. Daniel Rosen's nephew Harry also claimed to have come from Block Island to help his uncle and slept in for three nights. According to the Dannin account, the wives stayed by day and the men by night. Food was brought in by the Nathan Dannins, who at that time lived on Barney Street, which is adjacent to the north side of the synagogue. In view of the facts that David Rosen was president of the Touro Congregation at the time, that Fischel David was one of the leaders in the affair, and that the Dannins both then and now were keenly interested in shul (synagogue) affairs, much credence can be given to this version.

Another odd and interesting sidelight that merits at least passing mention is the strange case of one of the participants, Hugo Riddell. Riddell, who hailed from Providence, identified himself by a card bearing the legend "formerly Assistant Hebrew Rabbi, Christ's messenger to the Jews." He claimed that he had been invited to lecture at the synagogue as long as he didn't "preach Christ" to them. He claimed, moreover, that his presence at the synagogue that day was as an innocent guest and that he was guiltless of creating any disturbance beyond that of being a Christian attempting to speak in a synagogue!

**Emotional Reaction**

As a rule there are several sides to every story, and, indeed, our story is no exception. The motivation of both the New York trustees
and the Newport rebels have already been explained. In all fairness, the viewpoint of the parties in the middle, the Shreiers, should be further clarified. The prevailing local prejudices kept surfacing throughout the controversy. The haughty attitude of the Schreiers, who were German, towards their fellow Newporters of other European backgrounds was revealed in the June 1899 litigation. They contemnptuously characterized their adversaries as a “mob”, a “Wild West Show”, and a “flock of sheep”. Their attitude of superiority was displayed rather openly in a frank letter written by Eugene Schreier’s daughter Sarah to a local newspaper, dated April 23, 1902. In it she referred to the “Russian Polish element” in town—a revealing glimpse of the conscious or unconscious prejudices of the American Jews of the period. Whether or not Sarah Schreier overstated her case, there was probably some justification for her horrified reaction. The letter, though lengthy and emotional, was well written. The opening paragraphs, not quoted here, are a somewhat poetic dissertation on the early history of the Jews in Newport. She continues:

And into this holy place, this place so dear to me, broke a lawless band masking in the cloak of religious feeling like wolves in sheep skins. They blasphemed the name of the Almighty by breaking into His Holy Temple: a deed which no good Jew or Christian would stoop to. No words can express how low was the act; an act punishable in olden times by stoning the offenders at the door of the Temple. What was their object? Surely not religion! For I am a Jewess every inch of me; believing strongly in the tenets of my holy faith and although the building was closed, a heart breaking thing for me, I have kept my Sabbath by worshipping at home. I have worshipped in the holy place ever since I was a little girl, first taught by dear old Dr. Mendes whose memory is cherished not only by our family but also by the citizens of Newport.

I could hardly wait for the Sabbath to come so that I could be once more in the dear old edifice. Still after the dear Rabbi’s death I continued to attend the services. At this time now about seven years ago the Russian-Polish element began to drift to this city and although the building was open and free to all alike to worship the average attendance consisted of our own family and two or three others. Where were these people’s religious feelings then? They waited to show their religious feeling by an act which condemns them as Jews by accident of birth but not by principles of religion. They waited for the eve of the Passover, one of the greatest of our holy days, and with a hammer broke open the doors of the synagogue, an outrageous sacrilege. But they were doing it for religion? And did they, these very religious fellows allow a fellow (for I cannot attribute to them nor to him the name of the man) who is neither Jew nor Gentile, to stand before the holy
ark and inspire them with the grandeur of their act and create
riot and violence in the House of God; do this for religion?

Nothing is so obnoxious to the zealous Jew as to see such a
fellow enter a temple; and in other places he would have been
scorned and thrown out, but then he was helping them for the sake
of religion. Which religion?

Oh, bitter mockery! They defiled the sacred temple; a deed more
atrocious than that of the destruction of the temple by the Romans,
in as much as their deed under the guise of religion, proclaims
them hypocrites. It is not a religion which prompted these fellows
to the disgraceful act, it was the desire to possess a building to
which they have no right, a holy place which they desecrated and
which we reverence and endeavor to protect.

Is it no wonder that such passion and emotion led, or at least
contributed to, the inevitable clash of personalities, ambitions, and
goals. So, the pot continued to boil!

The town apparently was full of rumors, and resentment against the
1899 Supreme Court decree was heard once again, if indeed it ever
stopped. Even the Newport Daily News took notice of the legal aspects
of the situation when it was reported on Thursday, April 25, 1902 that:

It is understood that the Newport Congregation will make a legal
fight against the execution of such an order. Just what they propose
to do is unknown, but they think they have a good case. The
New York people also think they have a good case based upon
the above decision and order, and the lawyers will have a chance
to fight it out in a final decision in court.

Just how much the Daily News actually knew or how much specula-
tion or guesswork was involved is immaterial. What actually happened
is what counts.

Against this background of strife, charge and countercharge, passion,
pride, frustration, and stubbornness coupled with the failure to get
relief from both the mayor and the governor, it is no wonder that
the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel felt that they had no recourse
other than to return to the courts!

**MORE LITIGATION**

This time they broadened the scope of their attack. They (the same
group of plaintiffs as before except for the substitution of Samuel
Hyman for Anthony Wallach) brought another action of forcible entry
titled *Equity 623 recorded No. 6915*. It alleged that on the 21st and
22nd days of April 1902 the synagogue was forcibly broken into by
the respondents and asked that the Superior Court come to Newport and hear the case of forcible entry and detainer.

However, the defendants in the present instance were Fischel David, Hugo Riddell, Max Wasserman, Israel David, Charles Wagner, Meyer Kravetz, Sigmund Schwartz, Moses David, Nathan Ball, David Frant, Moses Wagner, Nathan David, Joseph Dannin, Israel Josephson, David Rosen, and the Congregation Jeshuat Israel, while Eugene Schreier swore out the complaint. By including Congregation Jeshuat Israel, the New Yorkers attempted to prove their claim against the entire Jewish community of Newport, rather than the Touro Congregation alone as in 1899. This was a clever move but no more so than the next brilliant counter move made by counsel for the defense, John C. Burke. At the request of Fischel David and group, both Max Levy and, later, Clark Burdick were added to the defense. While in 1899 Max Levy was still a court stenographer and law student, by 1902 he had become a full-fledged lawyer, the only Jewish lawyer in town and in fact the first in Newport’s history. Burdick, a lawyer and prominent politician, was in later years associated in business with Nathan David in the now defunct Standard Wholesale Co. However, at the insistence of Burke neither Levy nor Burdick took an active part.

The strategy Burke now decided upon was based on a simple proposition. The only issue before the court was interference with the possession of the synagogue by the New York group, and the law was clearly against the defendants. Therefore, the only way to right the wrong claimed by his clients was to bring the matter before a court of equity. Hence, he astutely conceived the maneuver of asking Judge W. W. Douglas, who was in charge of the Newport Trial Division calendar of the Supreme Court, to restrain himself from hearing the forcible entry and detainer action being brought by the New Yorkers until Burke could file a bill in equity and his clients be heard. Burke proceeded to Providence to appear before Judge Douglas in person with his Bill of Complaint, which was numbered *Equity 622 recorded No. 6952*. It was titled “David, et al. vs. Levy et al.”

**Case Reaches Appellate Division**

This action by Burke put Judge Douglas on the spot. Since Douglas would have to hear the forcible entry case in Newport, Burke felt he should not sit on the motion for the restraining order in Providence. Douglas, however, was up to the challenge. He shrewdly took himself “off the hook” by allowing Burke to present his case to three judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court who happened to be
in another room in conference, agreeing to abide by their decision as to whether or not he should restrain himself. At that time the Supreme Court was comprised of two sections, the Appellate and the Trial Divisions.

After hearing Burke out, the Appellate Division advised Douglas not to issue a restraining order. They reasoned that the plaintiff's action was a summary one designed by law to protect persons who have allegedly been forcibly evicted from their property. If these allegations were true and they had indeed been evicted by Burke's clients, then the latter did not come into the court of equity with clean hands. Therefore, Judge Douglas should not enjoin himself from acting. Judge Douglas, true to his word, accepted their decision and refused to issue the restraining order. The forcible entry case then came before Douglas in Newport on May 8, 1902.

As in the original case of 1899, the issue was simple and was well presented by the plaintiffs. All they had to do was to show that they were in lawful possession and that the defendants had forcibly evicted them. If they proved that, then the court would order the restoration of the property to the persons who were unlawfully and forcibly evicted. It clearly called for a directed verdict against the defendants. First, Sheffield, counsel for the plaintiffs, outlined the case for the petitioners. Then, Eugene Schreier was called to explain how he was deprived of possession of the synagogue on April 21, 1902 by the sequence of events that occurred. Next, Doctor H. P. Mendes of New York testified to delivering the keys of the synagogue to Schreier, having received them from L. Napoleon Levy. He was followed by the parade of witnesses for the petitioners, who also testified to the disturbance at the synagogue. The Sheriff then testified to serving the court order which put Schreier in possession. Among the witnesses were Captain Garnett, Officers Dugan and Easton, and Deputy Sheriff Gifford, also Morton Chase and one Carlo Frero, both of whom saw the actual breaking and entering, and Sarah Schreier, who told of her encounter with the defendants inside the synagogue.

After an attempt had been made to reconcile the two parties, the case went to the jury. Judge Douglas was about to instruct the jury to direct a verdict against the defendants, when John Burke once again arose and requested leave to make a motion. The lawyers for the plaintiffs, including L. Napoleon Levy himself, James Tillinghast of Providence, and William P. Sheffield of Newport, objected on the grounds that no motion could be allowed as the action was a summary one limited to one point.
Judge Douglas, however, stated that he could see no harm in hearing what the motion was. Burke thereupon made another shrewd move. If indeed the court was going to direct the jury to return a verdict in favor of the plaintiffs, he requested that the Judge withhold execution for five days to allow him sufficient time to file a petition in the Supreme Court for a writ of certiorari, a petition to bring the record before the highest court for review. His move was based on the ground that the action by the New York trustees had been brought illegally since it had been sworn to by Eugene Schreier rather than by the trustees themselves, Schreier not being a party to the cause. The law on the other hand requires that the oath must be sworn by the complainant. Judge Douglas overruled the objection of the opposing attorneys and directed the jury to return a verdict in favor of the New York plaintiffs, but withhold issuance of an execution order for five days, as Burke requested.

Meaningless Victory

The sum of it all was that, although the trustees of Shearith Israel had won, the victory was meaningless, for the Newporters continued in possession of the synagogue night and day. The Supreme Court on June 11, 1902, as recorded in the Rhode Island Reports, Volume 24, Page 249, ruled against the plaintiffs, on the grounds that Schreier, who had signed the complaint, was not a party to the cause and the law did require that the oath be sworn by the complainant. Hence the action by the New York trustees was not in conformity with the law and was therefore void. The trustees of Shearith Israel were right back where they had started from in April!

Counsellor Burke in the meantime had pressed forward his plan and had filed a bill in equity which encompassed his original theory. The bill, therefore, included a history of the synagogue, the statement in the Rivera will that set forth "The Jewish Society Doctrine", and the Deeds of Trust of 1894. He argued that the trustees of Shearith Israel had been holding the synagogue unconditionally for the Jews of Newport to worship in, and that the deeds of 1894 were invalid. The New Yorkers countered on June 16 by successfully having the bill in equity moved to the United States Circuit Court for the District of Rhode Island on the grounds of diversity of citizenship, because L. Napoleon Levy was a citizen of New York. Also, they were granted an extension of time to August 15, so that they could prepare a reply. They filed a demurrer and plea to the bill in equity in the United States Court, as had the Touro Congregation in 1899. In it they stated
simply that they had title to the synagogue and that the Newporters had forcibly deprived them of possession of their property.

Events then rapidly came to a head and the demurrer was heard on December 13, 1902 by Judge Arthur L. Brown. The decision was handed down on January 10, 1903. Judge Brown sustained the demurrer and plea of the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel and dismissed the bill in equity which had been filed by John Burke for the Touro Congregation. Thus ended the possession of Touro Synagogue by the Touro Congregation, which ostensibly had held continuous services and definitely maintained peaceful possession since April 21, 1902.

ARGUMENTS STRUCK DOWN

Judge Brown's decision was both interesting and decisive in the way he struck down John Burke's arguments one by one. Judge Brown's opinion was to the effect that the original grant of land in the deed of 1759 was to individuals; that there were no facts to show that a trust arose as a result of that purchase; that, even if there were a trust in favor of the Jews of Newport, David and group did not allege that any of them were indeed Jews; and furthermore that Congregation Jeshuat Israel, a domestic corporation, could not be considered to be a Jew. Moreover, even assuming that they were Jews, they didn't show any facts which would give them legal or equitable interest in the building or the land. Finally, continuing his argument, Judge Brown referred to the famous portion in Jacob Rodriguez Rivera's will quoted by Burke that "... I have no exclusive right, title, of or to the Jewish Public Synagogue in Newport on account of the deed thereof, being made to myself, Moses Levy, and Isaac Hart... but that the same was done, meant, and intended in trust only, to and for the sole use, benefit, and behoof of the Jewish society, to be for them reserved as a place of public worship forever". He argued that the trust for the Jewish society did not mean a trust for the Jews of Newport and that they hadn't shown that they indeed constituted such a society or that they had the right to demand of such a society or its trustees the right to attend worship. Finally, he affirmed that, in addition to these failures of proof, the complainants could not take the law into their own hands, acquire possession before and then invoke the aid of a court of equity to maintain them in possession. This possession as it appeared from the bill was without legal or equitable justification and appeared by the plea of the New York trustees to have been obtained by forcible entry and detainer. In the last analysis, despite all that had happened, Judge Brown's decision
in the demurrer did not decide the question of legal ownership, but only the rights to possession.

**Reconciliation**

In the meantime the turbulent situation, which had been boiling since 1893 or 1899, the year depending on one's point of reference, came to a head in fact as well as by law. For, in the interval between the verdict by the State Court against the New York trustees on June 11, 1902 and Judge Brown's decision in the United States Court against the Newporters on January 10, 1903, attitudes softened and a spirit of conciliation once again permeated the air. Lawyers for the New York trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel, Sheffield in particular, approached Counsellor Burke and posed the question of reconciliation so that the controversy could be settled once and for all. Burke indicated that if the New York group would be reasonable, it could be accomplished. And within the Jewish community of Newport itself the two rival congregations, whose differences had not apparently been hard and fast and may have been more superficial and emotional than real and logical, agreed to phase out the rebel Touro Congregation and become one again under the banner of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel. After a series of conferences between the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel and Congregation Jeshuat Israel, an agreement in the form of a five year lease was signed on February 1, 1903, the terms of which are still adhered to.

**The Agreement**

The principal terms of the agreement were as follows:

1. The annual rental was to be one dollar payable in advance on the first day of February of each year.

2. If said one dollar was not paid or any of the "covenants herein contained" were defaulted, the New York trustees could "reenter the said premises and the same to have again, repossess, and enjoy."

3. The Newporters could not "assign this lease nor lot nor any part of the said premises nor make any alterations therein" without the written consent of the New York trustees "under the penalty of forfeiture for damages nor could they occupy or use the synagogue nor permit the same to be used for any purpose other than herein stated without the like consent under the like penalty."

4. Congregation Jeshuat Israel "will cause the same to be used and occupied for the maintenance therein of the usual and stated religious
services according to the ritual, rites, and customs of the Orthodox, Spanish, and Portuguese Jews at this time practiced in the Synagogue of the Congregation Shearith Israel in the city of New York."

5. "Before any minister can officiate in said synagogue his appointment to the position must first be approved of in writing by a majority of the parties of the first part (the New York Trustees) or of their successors."

6. Any violation by the local congregation could result in repossession by the New York trustees, but otherwise they could "peacefully and quietly have and enjoy the said demised premises for the term aforesaid."

7. At the expiration of the term of time agreed to the Congregation Jeshuat Israel "will quit and surrender the premises hereby demised in a good state and condition as reasonable use and care thereof will permit damages by the elements excepted."

The committee for Congregation Jeshuat Israel, consisting of Julius Engel, I. J. Josephson, and David Frant, signed the document in the presence of William P. Sheffield. Signing for the New York group before Lewis A. Mitchell, Notary Public in New York City, Cert. No. 196, were the eight plaintiffs who brought the April 28, 1902 action against Congregation Jeshuat Israel.

At a special meeting called for that purpose the above lease was discussed and approved by Congregation Jeshuat Israel, as reported in the following minutes:

Newport, R. I.
Feb. 2, 1903

At a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel at Newport, Rhode Island on the 2nd day of February 1903 the following was unanimously passed:

Whereas all matters in difference between this Congregation and Napoleon Levy and others, Trustees, owners of the Synagogue building at Newport, having been amicably settled and adjusted by Messrs. Engel, Josephson, and Frant, a Committee authorized to confer with the said Trustees, and

Whereas the said Committee having reported the terms of said adjustment, it is now

Resolved that the said Julius Engel, I. J. Josephson, and David Frant of this Congregation be and they hereby are authorized and directed to surrender the possession of the Synagogue building, premises, and paraphernalia belonging thereto at Newport to the
The 1902 Sit-in at Touro Synagogue

said Trustees, owners of the property and to agree upon the terms and the provisions of a lease from said Trustees to this Congregation for the term of five years from February 1903, at the nominal rent of one dollar yearly, in form satisfactory to the landlord.

Barney Wilsker, Sec’y

This, then, is the story of a gallant group of “greenhorns”, who were determined to shape their own religious destiny in their newly adopted city. They would have a synagogue to worship in no matter what was required to achieve it. Could it have occurred at any other place at any other time under any other circumstances? The chances are remote. Take away any of the given factors and it is unlikely that what had happened might ever have taken place at all.

STORY OF A PARADOX

It is the story of the paradox of Congregation Jeshuat Israel and the basis for the enduring relationship of relaxed congeniality that has flourished between the Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel of New York and the Ashkenazic Congregation Jeshuat Israel of Newport. This relationship, which has been put to the test and been renewed many times, contrasts with the earlier controversies beginning in 1893. It settled once and for all the principle of which Newporters would be the legal successors to the old Congregation Yeshuat Israel and which group would shape the destiny of Touro Synagogue in the years ahead. Whatever hard feelings still existed were strictly among the members of the local congregation based upon differences of personality and of European origin. With the passage of time other differences arose out of diversities in secular education, disparities in the accumulation of material wealth, and religious preferences related to the three major branches of Judaism—Orthodox, Conservative or Reform. Such differences have in our time overshadowed the earlier controversies in emphasis and importance. It is hoped that one day the bonds common to all Jews will prevail over their differences, as they did in Newport almost three-quarters of a century ago.

NOTES

1Many of the records of Congregation Shearith Israel were still packed in boxes after moving to its present location and thus were not available to this writer in 1972. However, secondary sources are available and helpful. In this category is Rabbi Morris A. Gutstein’s “The Story of the Jews of Newport,” which contains on page 271 the Rev. David Baruch’s 1893 communication to New York referring to the organization of “two separate bodies.” The rest of his account is brief and incomplete.

Likewise, the whereabouts of the Reverend Abraham Pereira Mendes’s record book of 1888 through 1892 and the Touro Synagogue visitors book of 1880 through
1907, both of which came into the hands of Rabbi David de Sola Pool, are presently unknown. We are fortunate to have his summary of the data contained therein. This account confirmed the relationship between Eugene Schreier and the Congregation Shearith Israel and also informs us of the men who were active in the years before 1893, when Jews again settled in Newport. It also contains much other relevant material.

Newport city documents, which were annual summaries of the city government's activities were important in verifying that Lewis Ginsberg was a paid employee of the organization in 1884. They disclose which rabbis were paid and which were not paid during the controversial period. They also revealed that no rabbis were paid during periods when the synagogue was closed.

Judge Burke's recollections, even though reduced to writing many years after the fact, were a prime source for David Adelman's account and are a major source for the legal aspects of the controversy. Official court records confirm his recollections. They are also our most reliable source concerning his legal services to Fischel David and the Touro Congregation.

The Newport police records are the most reliable source concerning the actual break-in, the persons arrested, and those booked on specific charges. They help dispel many of the myths that circulated in later years.

The accounts in the contemporary press gave much detail during the entire episode on the actual break-in, the court cases, and the emotional aspects of the affair as revealed in the letters written by the various principals involved.

SOURCES


Ball, Nathan: Page 2 of an outline summary of his career in Jewish community affairs now in Archives of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Touro Synagogue.

Burke, Judge John C.: Written recollection of his part in the "break in" compiled at the request of Julius Schaffer, Esq. now in Archives of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Touro Synagogue.

February 1903 copy of Lease between Congregation Jeshuat Israel and Trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel.


Interviews with John Dannin, Mary Dannin Levin, and Fanny Dannin.

Minutes of Congregation Jeshuat Israel 1893-1899 recently recovered and now in files of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Touro Synagogue.

Newport City Documents, 1884 to 1902.

Newport Daily News, pertinent issues from March 31, 1899 through April 1902.

Newport Journal and Weekly News, printed articles from 1901 through 1902.

Newport Mercury, April 1902.

Newport Police Arrest Book, April 1902.

Newport Police Official Records, April 1902.


Probate Court Records, Newport, R. I., 1898.

Records of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Newport County, Vol. 51.

Records of Land Evidence, Newport, R. I., 1894.


Stanhope, Clarence: Scrapbooks, Newport Historical Society.

State of Rhode Island Acts and Resolves, 1899.

Supreme Court Records, Rhode Island Reports, Vol. 24, p. 249.
As the year 1924 began it did not augur well for the future of the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island. The community was in a state of transition as a result of a change in its numbers, character, and problems. Many of the pre-World War I families had left, and many new ones were coming in. Most of the existing organizations which had been created to complement the efforts of Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue) and the Ladies Auxiliary of Congregation Jeshuat Israel were limited in scope and in function. The hub of activity had been the YMHA and YWHA,* both of which had served their purpose admirably in bringing cultural, educational, athletic, and social activities to the community. However, their popularity along with that of other organizations was on the wane in the 1920s. Another group, The Family Circle, an early forerunner of the Cousins' and Couples' Club concept was limited to certain families. The situation, therefore, was opportune for a group such as the B'nai B'rith to enter the scene, fill the void, and meet the needs of the new community. The gloomy outlook at the year's inception was about to be reversed.

Newport's new man of destiny appeared in the person of Samuel Goldman from the Henry Friedman Lodge No. 899 of B'nai B'rith in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Representing District Grand Lodge No. 1, he entered into negotiations with the late Nathan David and other community leaders such as Doctor Samuel Adelson, Max Adelson, and others.

In a relatively short time Judah Touro Lodge No. 998, Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, was organized with thirty-two charter members, including many of the community's outstanding young men and leaders. The fledgling group deemed it fit and proper to grace the new lodge with the name of Judah Touro, philanthropist, soldier, and benefactor of many worthy causes, including the Newport Jewish community. The Institution Banquet was held on November 2, 1924 at the New Cliffs Hotel with a four-part program. Among those present were many dignitaries of B'nai B'rith, including the following:

Louis Fabricant: President District Grand Lodge No. 1
Henry Lasker: Past President District Grand Lodge No. 1

*Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Associations.
This was before the heyday of radio and the emergence of television. The limited scope and activities of the few other organizations and the limited mobility of the community created a definite need and demand for cultural, educational, and especially social activities in this relatively homogeneous and gregarious community. Newport was ready for B’nai B’rith, and B’nai B’rith with its three principles of Benevolence, Harmony and Brotherly Love suited well the Newport Jewish community.

The new lodge met twice a month on Thursday evenings—alternating business and social programs. At first they met in the small upstairs room in the rear of Touro Synagogue. With an expanding membership creating the need for larger quarters, the lodge moved to the Builders’ and Mechanics’ Hall on Washington Square. Members wore tuxedos, and meetings were conducted according to full ritual. The lodge also took its degree team quite seriously; such teams were judged in annual contests conducted by the District Grand Lodge.

One of the most important aspects of the lodge’s work was its support of the “Widerscope” program, which has since evolved into the Service Fund. The Widerscope program included the Anti-Defamation League, Hillel, and support for Palestine. The lodge raised money for this program by a series of popular bridge parties under the chairmanship of Irving Eisenberg and Samuel Kosch.

The social programs, which were open to the public, consisted of an address by a guest speaker on a timely and interesting subject, entertainment by Jewish talent of the community, orchestral music, dancing, and refreshments. Dances were also held annually for several years and on a number of Jewish holidays. The lodge for a time published a monthly newspaper called “The Spectator”, edited by Murray Jacobs. It was revived in the 30s for six years with Samuel Kosch as editor. A popular activity during the 30s was the bowling league, organized by Abraham Pechow. It climaxed each season with an annual banquet. An example of the lodge’s participation in national affairs
A symposium held in 1936 in honor of United States Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who acknowledged the affair with a personal note to the lodge. The speakers were Judge Mortimer A. Sullivan, Judge Robert M. Dannin, and Rabbi Morris Gutstein, all of Newport. The committee included George Teitz, Nathan Ball, and Everett Hess.

From pre-World War I days the Jewish community had dreamed of having a community building of its own. When this finally came to fruition, the lodge moved to the building, commonly referred to as the Jewish Community Center*. Upon his death, Samuel Goldman, who had helped initiate the lodge, had attended nearly all of its meetings, and had been made an honorary member of the lodge, left a bequest to furnish a room for the use of the lodge. This was dedicated in an appropriate ceremony in conjunction with the seventh installation of officers on January 16, 1930. The room on the second floor of the Center is still used by the lodge, although breakfast meetings are now held in the lower assembly and social hall.

After World War II the lodge honored the returned Jewish veterans, as had the YMHA after World War I, in a gala affair held at the Viking Hotel with city, state, and lodge dignitaries present. During the war members and their wives had made regular visitations to the Naval Hospital, the Naval Base, the Robinson House on Kay Street, and the USO on Thames Street. They served pancakes and refreshments and played bingo. The lodge also took care of the two rooms in the Center that the Jewish Welfare Board had had remodeled to serve as a USO for servicemen of all faiths.

Although the lodge went into a decline after the war, it made a strong and lasting comeback between 1948 and 1950 with the entrance of new members and the presidencies of William Dannin, Clifford Weiss, and Bernard Kusinitz. During these three terms, the lodge debt was paid off, a surplus created, and past dues collected to the extent of 97 per cent. The 25th Anniversary event was held in 1949 at the Muenchinger-King Flotel. Much interest was created by a well-planned and extensive program embracing many B’nai B’rith activities and the use of local and professional talent.

Because of its impact on both the lodge and the community, and since it served for many years as a prototype with some modifications based on changing conditions, the program for the crucial year of

*A Greek revival mansion across Touro Street from Touro Synagogue, moved from its former location on Washington Square. Es.
1948-1949, as planned by the program chairman, Bernard Kusinitz, under the supervision of the president William Dannin, is relevant:

- Dedication of Veteran's Plaque at Jewish Community Center and Memorial Service at Jewish Cemetery
- June Frolic and dance at Newport Beach
- Informal talks on “City Planning” by Alfred Edwards
- Card Social and refreshments at Community Center
- “Jewish Wit and Humor” featuring Frank Shapiro
- “Father and Son Night” with movies
- Hillel Pilgrimage to Newport from three Rhode Island Colleges
- “Trends in Anti-Defamation” and “The Rumor Clinic” featuring James R. Silverman
- “The German Mess” featuring Dr. Saulk Padover
- Silver Anniversary Dinner Dance, with Quincy I. Abrams, Vice President, District Grand Lodge No. 1 as guest speaker

The community, with the aid of B'nai B'rith, had responded to its cultural and educational needs with less emphasis on the social aspects than in previous years. Dances were held with less and less frequency, while entertainment took the form of spectator rather than participation events.

In the fifties and sixties the lodge again demonstrated its ability to revitalize itself and to respond to changing conditions. The community underwent a considerable transformation as it had after World War I. It now became more mobile. Its roots were now no further away than in nearby cities rather than in Europe. Radio and television supplied home entertainment to a degree never before known. As the need and desire for social and cultural activity declined, the lodge switched its emphasis to service activities. The ritual type meetings on Tuesday or Thursday evenings were discontinued in favor of Sunday morning meetings conducted without ritual but quite often with breakfast. Programming and activities embraced the entire range of official B'nai B'rith concern.

There were annual Anti-Defamation League Programs with appropriate speakers, such as, on one occasion, Sol Kolak of the Boston ADL office. There were brotherhood nights with such speakers as Father Henry Sutcliffe, Sister Mary Christopher, and Michael Walsh; panel discussions; choir groups; and presentation of plaques to graduates of the Naval Officer Candidate School. Sports nights were held in the Jewish Community Center with speakers, movies, prominent sports
personalities, and refreshments. Trips to Boston in groups for athletic meets were arranged. Citizen of the Year Awards accompanied by testimonial dinners were initiated in 1957 with Winifred Mason as the first recipient. The lodge also produced a musical revue, “The Community Capers of 1961”, the proceeds of which went to charity.

Monthly visitations were made to the Newport Naval Hospital by a committee of brothers including Jack Falkow, Morton Kosch and Barney Cohen. The committee provided good cheer, refreshments, bingo parties, and prizes. For this activity the lodge received an American Red Cross Certificate Award. The lodge hosted several Central New England Council meetings. John J. Dannin, a member of the lodge, became president of the Council in 1964.

Three faithful workers, John J. Dannin, Samuel Kosch, and Irving Eisenberg, were honored, with special recognition to Kosch, in a special ceremony at the Muenchinger-King Hotel in which the new members of that year were inducted under the designation “Sam Kosch Class of 1960.” Annual Memorial Day services were held at City Hall, and markers and flags were placed on Jewish veterans’ graves. A Judah Touro Lodge No. 998 Scholarship in memory of Joel Goldberg was awarded annually on a non-denominational basis to a Rogers High School student entering college.

The lodge participated regularly in Oneg Shabbat* programming in Touro Synagogue. Funds were raised for the Chile Disaster Relief of 1966, the year of the great earthquake, for which the National Jewish Monthly carried a story with pictures.

A significant event in the sixties was the 40th Anniversary of the lodge, on October 13, 1964, held at the Shamrock Cliff House. The prestige of the lodge in B'nai B'rith circles during the Morton Socks presidency was evidenced by the presence at the celebration of Label Katz, the international president of B'nai B'rith. Also present were local, state, national, and military dignitaries. The overall committee was headed by Morris Dannin and included Samuel Kosch, Irving Eisenberg, Barnett Fisher, Aaron Slom, Earle Slom, Milton Mitler, John J. Dannin, Morton Socks, Joseph Dannin, Philip Goldberg, Samuel Bor, and Jack Falkow. Among the dignitaries were Mayor Charles A. Hambly, Jr., of Newport; Rabbi Stanley H. Dreifuss, first rabbi of Temple Shalom of Newport; a representative of Governor John H. Chafee; Veterans Administrator Charles L. Nelson; US Representative Fernand St. Ger-

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*Oneg Shabbat, literally “Sabbath joy or delight” (Hebrew). Cultural or social gatherings held on Friday nights in synagogues following the regular services.
main; US Senators Clairborne Pell and John O. Pastore; and Rabbi Theodore Lewis of Touro Synagogue.

While much of the familiar programming continued into the seventies, new activities were added. Among these were annual Mayoral resolutions honoring the State of Israel accompanied by the raising of the Israeli flag at City Hall. The 25th Anniversary of the State of Israel, celebrated by one of the largest crowds in history at the Jewish Community Center, was arranged by Charles Waterman of the Jewish Planning Council and president of Judah Touro Lodge, the lodge being one of the sponsoring groups of the Council. Since the inception of the AZA* and its metamorphosis into the B’nai B’rith Youth Organization for both boys and girls, the lodge has had a growing relationship with youth extending into the late 60s and 70s. It participated in joint programming and provided both financial and administrative assistance when they hosted other youth groups from nearby cities. The lodge, working with the Jewish Planning Council, obtained a room in the Center for the exclusive use of the BBYO. Vocational guidance was offered to the young people through the B’nai B’rith vocational service.

While visitations to the Newport Naval Hospital ceased, the lodge’s brotherhood programming expanded to include other groups such as the Stone Mill Lodge No. 3 of the Masons. The Lodge observed the 1970 Brotherhood Week in March 1970 in Touro Synagogue with Father Joseph P. Lennon, Vice President of Providence College, as speaker. This was the first appearance of a non-Jewish clergyman there as a principal speaker since World War I days, and the first of a Catholic priest ever.

The future of a group is assured only to the extent that there is a constant injection of new blood to blend with the experience of the old.

It would appear that the survival of the Judah Touro Lodge No. 998 of B’nai B’rith in Newport, while other similar groups disappeared after a few years, was attributable to (1) the flexibility of its leadership in recognizing the changing role of B’nai B’rith in the community; (2) the changing emphasis of B’nai B’rith programming as the character, nature, and needs of the community changed; and (3) the fact that many of the brighter and more concerned young men of Newport saw fit over the years to become involved in its activities.

*Aleph Zadek Aleph, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
No people have a greater sense of historical continuity than do the Jews, and no culture can claim a more significant historic past than that of the Jews. Furthermore, no Western culture in fact can divorce itself from its Hebraic ancestry. It is little wonder then that the Jew, in his vision of the future, keeps one eye upon the past. It is no small wonder, too, that he would preserve his past and his heritage.

The history of the Jews of Norwich goes back only a century and a quarter. Because the Jewish population of Norwich has remained fairly stable, the temptation has been strong to fill the following account with names familiar to all, to concentrate on family histories and on the genealogies of the "old" and prominent families. Yet the history of a people, particularly a social history, is the history not of a person or persons, but of people organized into a social community. Names have been mentioned, but only when they symbolized an event, a movement, or an era, or were otherwise indicative of something more important than the names themselves.

THE GERMAN MIGRATION

The Jew in Connecticut is of comparatively recent origin. As a member of a dissenting religion he found little welcome among the descendants of Puritan New Englanders except as an itinerant peddler and barterer of goods out of New York. The Connecticut Charter of 1662, indeed, proclaimed "the maintenance of the Christian faith (as its) only purpose." New London, sister city of Norwich, and one of the few large cities of Connecticut, harbored not a single Jewish family throughout the 18th Century. There were no Jewish communities and no congregations until 1777, when the Jews who fled Newport settled in Stratford. Not until 1840 was there a synagogue...
in Connecticut. And not until 1851 is there a record of Jewish settlement in Norwich.

The Norwich Evening Courier of October 30, 1851 carried the advertisement of one Adolph Chamansky, informing the reader that his store on 119 Main Street offered for sale “cloths and clothing”. Adolph seems to have come to Norwich alone and boarded at the American House. It was not until almost a decade later (1860) that his brother, Joseph, followed him to Norwich, and, in emulation of Adolph, opened a clothing store. That generation of the family remained to become permanent residents of Norwich and the precursor members of a Jewish community. In the cemetery of the First Hebrew Society are the still clearly marked graves of Adolph and Pauline (wife of son Louis), Joseph and his wife, Henrietta, and one of a David Chamansky. At least one member of the Chamansky family left Norwich. Louis, the son of Joseph, the clothing store owner of Norwich, became the merchandising manager of the great R. H. Macy and Co. department store of New York and, upon his retirement, became a director of the company.

The 1875 Norwich Directory lists the name of David Rosenblatt, a weaver, who lived in Yantic. David’s distinction is that, of the 150,000 Jews in the United States at the time of the Civil War, he was one of the 7,000 who volunteered for the Union Army. (Some 5,000 Jews served with the Confederate Army.) David’s military career was of short duration. He enlisted in Rifle Co. B (commanded by Captain Frank S. Chester of Norwich) of the 2nd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. Captured July 21, 1861 at Bull Run, he was paroled on June 2, 1862, and was discharged that same month.

Both Rosenblatt and the Chamanskys had emigrated from Germany, and for some twenty years the Jews of Norwich were all of German origin with the exception of the Raphaels (Ellis and Sam) who came to Norwich from England. Ellis is listed in the 1857 Directory as a cigar maker and again in 1875 as a traveling merchant. It was not unknown for Jews of that period to supplement their income by “travelling”. Sam, too, was listed (1875) as a cigar maker at 199 Main Street. Possibly Sam was taken into the business to free Ellis for “travelling”.

In the Fifties, following a period of unrest in Germany, there were large scale migrations. The failure of the democratic revolution of 1848 drove many thousands of Jewish immigrants to the United States, where the economic future loomed bright and civil rights were guaranteed.
It is the purpose of this sketch to relate the story of the arrival of the Jewish people in Norwich and of their accommodation to the community. The Jewish community is recent enough in origin and development for names to hold an emotional content for Jews indigenous to Norwich. While none of the first immigrants from Germany are any longer in Norwich, their names and their memory linger on. They were the pioneers and set the tone and the tempo for the next half century of Jewish settlement.

Through their initiative the first Jewish organization came into being. Characteristically, that organization, which was named “The First Hebrew Society,” provided for a cemetery. The first entry in the minutes of the Society, written in a beautiful clear script, is dated “Sunday, June 22d, 1878” and reads as follows:

“At the request of Several Gentlemen a meeting was held on the above date, Mr. Daniel Krause acting as chairman, Mr. Abraham Plaut as Secretary. On motion which was carried it was resolved to form into a Society to be called ‘The First Hebrew Society of Norwich’. The following Gentlemen handed in their names.

Mr. Joseph Plaut  D. Krause
Isaac Plaut        M. Richter
Abraham Plaut     A. Seidel
B. Behrisch       H. Seidel
Jos. Brainfeld     M. Seidel
M. Kempner         S. Samuels
I. Kempner         E. Raphael

“On Ballotting for officers Mr. Joseph Plaut was elected President, Mr. Ellis Raphael Vice-President, Mr. Isaac Plaut Treasurer, and Mr. Samuel Krause Secretary. . . .”

There was a genuine need for the Society as the Jewish Community took root in Norwich. In 1869 a son, Gabriel, was born to Joseph and Rosalie Plaut in Norwich on March 28. He may well have been the first child born to Jewish parents in Norwich. Unfortunately his may also have been the first Jewish death in Norwich, but not the first burial. Without a cemetery of their own, the parents Plaut interred their son Gabriel in the Beth Israel cemetery of Hartford on August 22, 1877. In the following year, feeling well enough established, the Jews of Norwich had formed the First Hebrew Society with Joseph Plaut, father of Gabriel as president.

Nothing so permanent as a cemetery would have been established had these Jews not felt that they had struck roots in the New England soil of Norwich. They had come to live in Norwich; but to live, they
must work. The clothing business attracted them in considerable numbers. Not all, of course. The Raphaels, we have seen, were cigar makers as well as "travellers". David Rosenblatt was a weaver. But the Chamansky set the pace. While Abraham Plaut is noted in the 1860 City Directory as a jeweler, the brothers Joseph and Isaac are identified in the Norwich Bulletin of May 1, 1875 as purveyors of dry goods, millinery, carpeting, and watches at 144 Main Street and at Water Street. They also acted as draft and passenger agents for a local steamship line.

Among those who merchandised "dry and fancy goods" were the Spiers, Levi and Nathan (1869). Nathan Spier later joined with H. Seidenberg; and Bernard Behrisch in 1875 opened the "New York Clothing Store" at 153 Main Street. That same year Samuel Baum was in "millinery and fancy goods", and Moses Gotthelf was a competitor in "fancy goods". Both were located on Main Street; and J. Stern opened his "Pavilion", formerly S. A. Goldsmith's establishment.

Behind Stern's "Pavilion" must be a story now lost in the dim mists of memory. If we follow the advertisements in the Norwich Bulletin, we note in 1861 the firm of Stern, Seidenberg, & Co.; in 1867 Seidenburg and Bachrach, and in 1875 Stern's "Pavilion". This was the age of the Goulds, the Fisks, the Vanderbilts — and the Sterns!

Adolph Chamansky was a pioneer in more than a chronological sense. His first advertisement in the Bulletin of October 30, 1851 foreshadows the merchandising skill which his son, Louis, later brought to flower at R. H. Macy and Co.

A. Chamansky
119 Main St. Norwich
Invites the attention of his friends, and the public at large to his assortment of CLOTH AND CLOTHING

Having adopted the "Live and Let Live" Principle he does not pretend to sell at less than cost but simply to furnish FIRST RATE ARTICLES at a fair price — every article being made up in the most faithful and workmanlike manner.

Cloths, Cassimeres, Vestings,
Scarf, Hosiery, Gloves, Ties, Suspenders, etc.
A single call will convince purchasers that the above is NO HUMBUG but a simple statement of facts.

Recollect the address,
Adolph Chamansky
119 Main St.
In addition to the clothing merchant and the cigar maker, there were the peddlers, Abraham Seidel and Henry Seiclel, who specialized in tin. By 1875 there must have been a sizable community, for the directory lists also C. Schneider, a tailor, and a goodly number of others in similar businesses and trades. By 1900 the City Directory lists 36 Jews who were peddlers, 7 shoemakers, 11 tailors, 6 who worked in the Falls Mill, 17 store owners, 3 bakers, 5 clerks, and 2 laborers.

By 1900 the German Jews had been joined by their co-religionists from Russia. But these first families hoped for more for their children. In 1886 Clara Behrisch, daughter of Bernhard, became a teacher in the elementary schools of Norwich after being graduated from the New Britain Normal School. Her brother, Gabriel, upon graduating from the Norwich Free Academy and Yale College, studied law; later he became attorney for the Title Guarantee and Trust Co. of New York. In 1912 Fannie Hirsch, daughter of Heyman, began to teach in the elementary schools, followed in 1913 by Emma Shereshevsky.

In looking back upon the first Jewish settlers who had migrated to Norwich from Germany, one wonders: What manner of men were they? The coincidence of timing strongly suggests that they were motivated to leave Germany by the failure of the Revolution of 1848. It is likely that they did not come directly to Norwich. New York, the port of entry and the home of their compatriots, must have held them for a number of years. David Rosenblatt, a Norwich Jew, volunteered for the Union Army at a time when the numbers of volunteers were inadequate for the demands of the war. Even draft quotas were hard to fill. Bounty jumping and draft riots were a serious problem in the North of the Civil War period.

Isaac Plaut in 1872 became the first Jewish registered voter. He must have applied for his "first papers" early upon his arrival in the United States. In 1892 Samuel Baum served on the Committee on the Town Deposit Fund; he moved to New York the following year. Bernard Behrisch in 1894 was one of seven Grand Jurors for the Town of Norwich; and Samuel Blinderman was one of six Grand Jurors till 1905. Thus these men found their way into the civic life of Norwich and of the United States.

Although of a later generation it is of interest that John Berell Sears, son of Jacob Sears, born in Norwich in 1902, graduated from Harvard College in 1923 and the Harvard Medical School in 1927. While this was not extraordinary at that time, Doctor Sears appears to have been the first Jewish Surgical House Officer at the Massachusetts General Hospital. He later was a resident in surgery at the Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, and still practices there. Ed.
More revealing than what may be gleaned or conjectured from these bare facts is the reminiscence of Clara Behrisch, who in 1956 was an alert 92 years of age and living in New York. Though her eyesight may have been impaired, her other faculties remained sharp and clear. She wrote:

Monday, April 11, 1955
New York, N. Y.

My dear Mrs. Gordon,

Please pardon my delay in answering your letter as my health is variable and my vision very poor. I fear my facts may not be perfectly accurate as I must write of happenings of so long ago.

We probably arrived in Norwich from New York in 1875, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard Behrisch with three of their children, Natalie, Clara, and Menno. Gabriel I., my oldest brother, was left with our grandparents so that he could continue his studies in City College. He came to Norwich a little later and entered the N.F.A. in the sophomore class. Our first home was on Union Street where we lived about two years. Then we moved to Spalding St., living there about 7 years. Ralph was born there.

In 1884, the year Gabe entered Yale and I was graduated from N.F.A., my father bought the house at 132 School St. where we lived twenty-four years, until 1908 when we moved to Brooklyn, N. Y. My mother died in January, 1892. Menno died in 1906. He was about 30 years old. I never think of our family as having been prominent in public life. My father on his arrival in Norwich bought a clothing store at 153 Main Street. He was an educated man, a graduate of a German gymnasium, who kept on with reading and studying. He had a philosophic mind, loved books, the theatre and music. While not an orthodox Jew, he was interested in all religions including our own and liked to trace out what contributions each one made to good purposeful living. Many of the Christian ministers were his friends and stopped in his store to chat with him. Some of them called on us in our home.

Gabriel I., Ralph, and I were graduated from N.F.A. Natalie sang in the choir of the Second Congregational Church as a contralto. She had an excellent mezzo-soprano voice. She was a member of the Choral Union and sang frequently, too, for the various clubs. Gabriel I., after graduating from the N.F.A. went to Yale College, studied law in the office of Waite and Green, and passed his bar examination and became a lawyer. Before he died in 1935, he had been for a number of years counsel for the Title Guarantee and Trust Co. of New York. Menno and Ralph became businessmen.

After being graduated from the N.F.A. I went to the Connecticut Normal School in New Britain, graduating in Feb. 1886. I taught in Central District Schools four years; as substitute, as
teacher, going from room to room, of very primitive science, temperance physiology, oral fractions and physical geography by means of a molding board. I did this work five days of the week. Dr. Keep asked me to study in the summer and take charge of gymnastic work at the N.F.A. but I refused as I liked the work I was doing. He wanted me to crowd my work into 3 days and give the N.F.A. two days. It meant harder work but very little more pay.

My mother was a real homemaker. She believed in trying to keep us all good, healthy, and happy, and she and my father succeeded in that. We had a wonderful home. My mother, too, loved music, reading, and the theatre. She played piano exceptionally well and was an excellent dancer. After an illness of two years, she died on January 16th, 1892, as I wrote above, aged 46 years and ten months. We all liked and were interested in people, and so were contributors to the various charitable organizations. We belonged to a literary club, a musical club, a German club headed by Sarah Hall Leavens who was then teaching German in the N.F.A. Gabe, Natalie, and I played piano. We often had musical evenings at home. Menno and Ralph joining in the singing. I did a little odd teaching now and then. I taught German to an N.F.A. teacher, piano to several pupils, and dancing to a class of public school teachers some of whom had been my teachers. I gave up the dancing class after 3 years as it taxed me too much.

Ralph married Caroline Tyler Turner in 1914. They had been school mates in the N.F.A. Caroline's first husband was Emerson Turner. Caroline is not a Jewess, but the marriage was an unusually happy one. Ralph died in 1945. My father died at the age of 83½ years in 1919. Natalie is totally blind and needs constant care. There were only a few German Jewish families in Norwich, and there was no Temple until there was an influx of Russian Jews. They had a synagogue. Natalie and I went there twice, but we couldn't understand their language. We often attended different churches. As children we attended the Sunday School of the Universalist Church for a short time.

There were three Plaut families in our time in Norwich. The Joseph Plaut family, Abraham Plaut family, and Isaac Plaut family. There was, too, the Kronig family, the Gotthelf and Hutzler families, the Seidel and Samuel families. The Chamsky family had a son Louis, who became a very important man at Macy's in New York.

I hope this account may help you. It may be too personal. Use as much or little as you care to. My best wishes to your committee engaged in compiling this history of Jews in Norwich.

My kindest regards to you.

Very Sincerely,
Clara Behrisch
The following obituary was published in the Norwich Bulletin of October 18, 1955:

OBITUARY
Natalie Behrisch
(Contributed)

Natalie Behrisch, beloved daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard Behrisch, sister of the late Gabriel I., Menno and Ralph Behrisch, and dear sister of Clara Behrisch, died July 4th. She had been ill for some time and was totally blind.

The Behrisch family moved to Norwich from New York in 1875. For many years they lived at 132 School Street, moving to Brooklyn in 1908.

Natalie a graduate of Broadway school, took special courses at the Academy, studied piano with Miss Charlotte Blackman and singing with Mr. Butterfield. She had an excellent mezzo-soprano voice, was a member of the Choral union, the Musurgia and B-natural clubs, later singing contralto in the Second Congregational church quartet. Often called upon to sing for various clubs and special meetings, she gave much pleasure with her unusually sweet voice.

Though long absent from Norwich, she had a strong attachment to it and her friends there of whom she spoke often.

She is survived by her devoted sister, Clara Behrisch, a resident of New York city.

The Russian Jews

The advent of the Russian Jew made an indelible imprint on the Jewish community of Norwich. In the course of time the German Jew who did not lose his identity or die without issue was assimilated into the now predominantly Russian Jewish community. By in-group marriage alone, if not by sheer numbers, the Russian Jew won supremacy. The Russian Jew, more orthodox in religious practice than his German co-religionist, more distinguishable in his customs and habits, his tongue less adaptable to English, and his exclusiveness well grounded in the history of his persecution, sought solace among his own. Not until the arrival of the Russian Jew was there a synagogue in Norwich; nor was there a significant pattern of residence.

The first mention of Russian Jews is in the minutes of the First Hebrew Society. The minutes of the Society for April 16, 1882 read: "Isaac Plaut brought to notice the destitute condition of the Russian Jews at Taftville. . ." Plaut lamented that a certain family had only one mattress for the whole family. The Society promptly donated twenty-five dollars for mattresses and ten dollars for shoes. On April
22 of that same year the Society called a special meeting further to assist this family of Russian Jews. A bill for shoes submitted by Isaac Plaut was approved and paid. These motions were all carried unanimously. The family remains unidentified.*

The first Russian Jewish family so far as can be determined is that of Lazar Markoff and his brother. "One was a learned scribe who became a farmer here. The other had a grocery store on Water St." Lazar, in the recollection of his daughter Anna D. Ableman, found his adjustment difficult. He often regretted his decision to emigrate. The reception the Markoff family received was a mixed one. Their gentle neighbors were "very, very friendly when we first came here." The children, however, were less kind. "Christ killers" was not the least of the epithets they cast at the Jews. Often a stone replaced the word. Complaints to the priest, however, proved effective. Despite Lazar Markoff's misgivings, the family remained to prosper, and its seeds were many. In 1920 his son, Kopland K. Markoff, M.D., became Chief of the Ear, Nose and Throat Department of the Backus Hospital of Norwich and consultant at the State Mental Hospital.

Other families that came to Norwich at approximately the same time showed much the same pattern of development. English was learned for business reasons — and even French for the French Canadians. Yiddish, however, was spoken at home. A Jewish and Hebrew education was received in the home. In 1895 Bernard Herman Cohen moved to Norwich with his family and became according to available information the first Hebrew teacher in Norwich. The children of most families went to the public schools and then in many cases to the universities. In 1918 Herman Alofsin, the second of that name, became the first Jewish attorney in Norwich. Children of Russian Jewish families also became teachers and doctors.

The hegira of the Cohen family is illustrative of the eastern European Jews' journey to America. "Leaving Lithuania, Europe, 65 years ago, the father, Bernard Herman Cohen, arrived in New York City, 1889, after spending 6 months in Liverpool, England.* Sixty years

*The earlier immigration of German Jews followed by waves of "traditional" Eastern European Jews was a progression repeated in scores of American communities. The late David C. Adelman described the Providence experience, where the established German Jewish community accepted the responsibility of helping the newly arrived and poverty-stricken Eastern European immigrants. He wrote: "The net result was that the 'Deutschen' furnished the money and the administration while the traditional Jews furnished the indigents." (Adelman, David C.: "The Providence Jewish Communities Unite". R. I. Jewish Historical Notes 3:160-191, [No. 3], Dec. 1960). Ed.
ago in 1895, they came to Norwich, where Bernard earned his living as a Hebrew teacher.”

The German Jew upon his arrival in Norwich established a business of his own. The more indigent Russian Jew became a tailor or peddler where little or no capital was required. Others, more numerous at first, worked in the foundries or mills. On occasion a daughter would find employment as a household servant. A goodly number came to Norwich through the aegis of the Immigrant Employment Agency, whose agent met the debarking immigrant at Ellis Island and persuaded him to exploit the golden opportunity that awaited him in the textile mills of Norwich, Taftville, and Yantic. More rarely one would open a store, as did Raphael Slosberg in the 1880s, who, with his brothers Charles and Simon, was the forerunner of a family now deeply rooted in the business and civic life of Norwich.

In 1898 Rabbi Max Stamm arrived, a gentleman of great wisdom and learning. He became the first Rabbi of Norwich and performed the ritual slaughtering, without which even the permissible meat of the cloven-hoofed animal is not “kosher”. With the “shohet” (ritual slaughterer) and the kosher meat market of Hertz & Son now joining that of the Alofsins, the Jewish community was established as a distinct entity with its observance of the traditional dietary law.

The Russian Jewish community was exposed to instances of liberal behavior or transgression by its less pious or more secular brethren. There was an occasional marriage out of the faith. A Mr. Friedman was the first of the Jewish volunteer firemen; he would ride on the Sabbath and on meeting synagogue worshipers on their walk home delighted in brandishing a lighted cigarette, an act of profanity on the Hebrew Sabbath. For milder excitement the Jews of Norwich would stroll past the “Porteous Mansion” on the corner of Pearl and Fairmount Streets to see the electric lights shining through the windows, a token of affluence in those early days of the century. Not the least pleasure was dropping into the little grocery or confectionery store to chat with the scholarly proprietor, never far from his book, who brought with him to America the reverence for learning so inbred in the Jew.

By 1900 the Jewish community in Norwich had grown to include some 120 heads of families, and the area of residence had begun to crystallize about the “West Side”. The German Jew tended to live near the center of the city not too far away from his place of business. Some boarded at the American House until they had become estab-
Established. Abraham Plaut lived on Grove Street; his brother Isaac made his home on Union Street; Levi Spier lived first at 3 Franklin Street and later moved to 16 Broadway. The Behrisches moved from Union to Spaulding to School Street. Some lived on Boswell Avenue, the Hirsches for example. The Seidels lived first on Cliff and then on Union Street. The 1900 Directory, however, frequently lists such places of residence as Cove, Aqueduct, Mechanic, High, West Thames, West Main, Spring, and Summit Streets. References were still made to Boswell and Grove Streets, but these were rather to the homes of the German Jews.

Even before this concentration on the “West Side”, a nucleus of the early Jews lived on Talman Street, among whom were the Gordons, the Searses, the Clarks, the Handlemans, and the Zendels. Still other nuclei were to be found in the Falls section, Taftville, and Yantic, indicating the influence of the Immigrant Employment Agency and employment in the textile mills of Norwich. In addition, by the second decade of the 20th century, it is estimated that approximately 50 per cent of the rural population in and around Norwich was Jewish.

By 1938, of a population of 34,140 in Norwich 1,647 were Jews. One-third of these 1,647 were foreign born, one-half residents for twenty-five years or more. Those under the age of thirty-six were largely native-born sons of Norwich. Three-fourths were lifelong residents. Thus the Jews were fast becoming indigenous to Norwich. The statistics for that year indicate that three-fourths of the 1,647 Jews in Norwich were engaged in trade, manufacturing, or the mechanical industries. One-half were self-employed, mostly in clothing or shoe factories. Ten per cent were professional.

One of the first graves of a Russian Jew in the cemetery of the Brothers of Joseph Synagogue is that of Jennie Markoff, 1890, daughter of Lazar. Mrs. Lazar Markoff died February 14, 1955. Within that same week she was joined by Kive Lahn and Mrs. Abraham Cramer, the three of whom were among the first Jews to come to Norwich. Shortly thereafter, on April 23, 1955, a son of the original Alofsins, Saul, died. These deaths marked the passing of an era.

Organizations

More enlightening about the nature of a people than the isolated events of individuals’ lives is the story of the institutions they founded and developed. Institutions reflect the character of the community. As secondary and tertiary sociological entities they indicate the dispersal of life out from the primary family grouping into society.
They indicate, too, the stability of the society. In a sense the history of a people is the history of the institutions they build.

Reference has already been made to the First Hebrew Society. Indicative of the quality of its early leaders is the exactness with which the minutes of the Society were kept and the beautiful hand in which they were written. Unfortunately for future historians the secretaries, acting in their typical fashion, confined their attention almost entirely to the business at hand, viz. the concern with the Society’s cemetery at Brewster’s Neck. One can follow clearly the business of building a fence about the cemetery, of the cost of funerals, of the expense of upkeep, and of the establishment of a trust fund, the interest of which was to guarantee the care and the beautification of the burial grounds. The Jew has a sense of history and of continuity with his past; in December 1929 a letter went out to members of the Society soliciting contributions for the trust fund with the following admonition:

“The members of our Society should never permit the existence in the little spot which is most reverent to them, the dilapidated conditions which their visits to other cemeteries have revealed sometimes as existing there. You have, no doubt, visited cemeteries where lay those who, in their days of life, were leaders in their communities, and found that the conditions existing there could bring nothing but sorrow to those who had any respect or love for them. Undoubtedly if they could have foreseen the deplorable conditions into which this last resting place had developed, they would have made provisions for its prevention.”

Not all was harmonious in the Society. Not infrequently members were dropped for non-payment of dues. A year after the founding of the Society, Abraham and Henry Seidel resigned and Max simply stopped paying his dues. The cause of the dissatisfaction is lost in the silence of the past. A decade later David Chamansky was suspended, but must have been reinstated since he is interred in the Society’s cemetery.

In the year of the founding a dispute arose over the name of the Society. Leopold Bechert found the word “Society” not to his taste and instead proposed “Congregation”. Daniel Krause, secretary, resorted to Webster’s Dictionary, and on his insistence “Society” was chosen as more representative of the group’s purpose. M. Samuels disliked both designations; he would not pay his fee until it became a “Lodge”. He was asked to leave, and did.

Meetings at first were held at Isaac Plaut’s store. But the Society
soon moved into quarters in Spier's Building on Shetucket Street, paying three dollars per month for the exclusive use of the meeting room. At approximately the same time the wives of the members of the Society formed an auxiliary, the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. As befitted the ladies, their society was to be “Benevolent” in purpose. President of the Society was Mrs. Joseph Chamansky, with Mrs. Isaac Plaut, secretary, and Mrs. Abraham Plaut, treasurer. The ladies maintained a weekly Sunday school in the Spier Building, in the same room as that rented by the First Hebrew Society, sublet to the ladies for $1.00 per month. In addition the room was sublet to the Lieder Kranz (Choral Society) for two dollars per month; thus the Society balanced its books as far as rent was concerned. The Lieder Kranz was also charged fifty cents a month for cleaning, the cost to the Society to clean the room for the entire month. In addition, the room was used for High Holiday worship services.

The constitution of the Society specified that “the object of this society shall be to visit the sick, bury the dead, and bestow acts of charity on Members of the Society.” Mention has already been made of the gift of shoes and a mattress to the “Taftville Jews”. But before that, on January 5, 1879, M. Richter asked for and received a loan of twenty dollars. At the next meeting, on February 2, 1879, however, the loan, on the motion of Joseph Plaut, was rescinded. Others did receive loans, and destitute Jews were buried at the expense of the Society.

The great exodus of Jews from eastern Europe to the United States began in the 1880s. In 1882, as previously noted, a Russian Jewish family located in the Taftville district of Norwich. By 1883 the Russian Jews of Norwich had organized a religious congregation, which they called the Congregation of Norwich, Connecticut. Unlike their German predecessors, who specified that the minutes of their meetings must be kept in English, these Russian Jews insisted that Yiddish be the only language of their meetings. The Congregation met in Lucas Hall, a third floor room which it shared with the Armory.24

The same year, 1883, saw the formation of a Burial Society by the Congregation; it purchased land for a cemetery at Brewster’s Neck in Preston, adjacent to that of the First Hebrew Society.

In March of 1886 members submitted bids in an auction for selection of the permanent name of the congregation. Kive Lahn, the high
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes

bidder, submitted the name, Brothers of Joseph, in honor of his son born that very week, the first born to a Russian Jew in Norwich.*

In 1898 a permanent synagogue was built on the "West Side". On August 27, 1899 the first regular minutes of this Congregation were recorded by Moses Hyman, secretary.

In the course of time the congregation expanded its activities. In 1911 a loan association was founded by Charles Slosberg with a grant of $400 donated by his father, Michael. Even today loans may be obtained from this fund by the needy without any interest charge. A Wayfarer's Organization has functioned continuously, reorganized in 1954 into a central agency with all soliciting abolished.

The strong sense of history of the Russian Jews and their pride in their culture impel them to perpetuate their individualism and their distinctive character and religion in their progeny. Hebrew instruction had already been given in private homes when the Brothers of Joseph organized a small school with twenty-eight children in attendance, housed in the Chappell Building. Bernard Cohen and D. Shereshevsky instructed the youth in the tradition of their fathers. They were joined in 1910 by Mendel Levenson. In 1915 a group of interested parents founded the Norwich Hebrew Institute with classrooms at the rear of the synagogue, where a Mr. Herman officiated as the first teacher. In 1924 the Institute was moved to its present site on Fairmount Street, the former home of Doctor Harry Higgins. M. I. Silverman, principal of the school from 1917 until he removed to Boston in 1945, determined its character for many years.

The first Rabbi of the Brothers of Joseph Synagogue was Joseph Baron, but there is mention of a Rabbi in Norwich prior to the advent of the synagogue. In 1895 Jacob Kromb (Crumb) was married by civil authority to an orphaned boarder of the Swartzburgs. A year later they were remarried in a religious ceremony in the T.A.B. Hall by Rabbi Benjamin Sachnowitz, thus becoming the first Jewish couple to be married in Norwich. In 1909 Rabbi Joseph N. Rosenberg be-

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*Joseph M. Lahn, who still survives, was honored on the occasion of his eighty-ninth birthday on March 3, 1975. Lahn, who was active in community affairs, served on the Norwich Tax Board, and is the oldest living former employee of The (Norwich) Bulletin Company. Some fifty years ago he rescued two boys from the nearby Yantic River.

Norwich had an interesting connection with the neighboring Rhode Island community of Westerly, some 19 miles away. Joseph M. Lahn's father, Kive Lahn, was an older brother of Max Lahn of Westerly (see R. I. Jewish Historical Notes 3:139-143, No. 3, Dec. 1960. "A Study of the Jewish Population of the Town of Westerly, Rhode Island"). Five other Lahn brothers and two sisters settled in the New York area and elsewhere. Ed.
came the spiritual leader of the congregation and remained for forty-
two years until his death in 1950, the beloved “Teacher” of his people.
Upon his death he was succeeded by Rabbi S. Shulman and later by
Rabbi Michel D. Geller, the present spiritual leader. The congre-
gation has continued to progress and grow.

At the end of the 1890s Rabbi Max Stamm moved to Norwich from
New York. While in New York he had learned the science of
Shehitah, Jewish ritual slaughtering, to augment his salary of two
dollars per week as Rabbi. He came to Norwich to provide spiritual
leadership and to practice Shehitah for kosher butcher shops already
established. He found approximately fifty Jewish families in Nor-
wich. But by 1906 the community had increased enough to permit
another group of Jews to organize a second Synagogue, The Sons of
Israel, with a building on High Street, which it still uses. Upon the
founding of this congregation Rabbi Max Stamm became its spiritual
leader. The Sons of Israel, however, fell upon difficult times finan-
cially. In 1910 the synagogue was saved from the auctioneer’s gavel
by George Greenberger, and the congregation was reorganized as the
Agudas Achim (Congregation of Brothers). It managed to survive
through numerous financial crises. Rabbi Osher Reisman was head
of the Congregation after 1942.

In October of 1929 several men met in Abner Schwartz’s store and
sent a message to the Jewish Theological Seminary requesting a Rabbi.
Thus was marked the advent of the third, and now the largest Jewish
congregation in Norwich. While the two previous congregations had
been Orthodox, Beth Jacob, named in honor of Jacob Slosberg, was
organized as a Conservative congregation with sermons in English and
other relaxations from the rigidity of the traditional liturgy. Thus a
new epoch in the history of Jewry in Norwich was initiated.

On October 28, 1929 the following item appeared in the Norwich
Bulletin:

“High Holiday Services at Community Synagogue at the Commu-
nity House of the United Congregational Church on Church Street,
were impressive. The dignified manner of the Rabbi and the learned
sermon in English attracted the interest of the young people who sat
in reverent attention.”

Student Rabbis Ira Eisenstein and Morris Margolis from the Jewish
Theological Seminary officiated. The phrases “dignified manner”,
“learned sermon”, and “young people who sat in reverent attention”
were overtones of the changes that had occurred in Jewish life in Norwich.

The Community House later became the permanent home of the Beth Jacob Synagogue. In the meantime, however, the congregation, at the invitation of the B’nai B’rith, met in the rooms of that organization on Shetucket Street. In November 1929 it purchased the Community House on Church Street, and in April 1930 it was consecrated. At that time the Torah Scroll was carried through the streets from its temporary residence on Shetucket Street to its permanent home, where the new ark was dedicated. During the following two years the congregation had no permanent rabbi. Charles Gordon and William Israelite were hosts to student rabbis who came in their turn to offer spiritual guidance in many phases of synagogue life.

The Beth Jacob Synagogue has prospered over the years. In May 1942 it added the Berkman Memorial Library (named in honor of Bessie Berkman), paid off its mortgage (June 12, 1944), opened its own Religious School (1930), and in 1956 erected a large new religious school building. In 1948 it built a chapel in honor of Abraham Abelman and in 1952 refurbished the vestry. Under Rabbi Marshall J. Maltzman it continued to grow and to extend its services.

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The ladies of the congregations organized into “sisterhoods”. On December 7, 1929 the ladies of Beth Jacob met at the home of Mrs. William Israelite to form the Sisterhood of the Beth Jacob Synagogue. Dues were levied, not for the purpose of raising funds, but to “emphasize Jewish culture”. The growth of the community and its coming of age were manifest in the ladies’ developing interest in culture. It was evidence of growing leisure, financial stability, and self-pride.

The list of organizations formed by the Jewish ladies of Norwich is long, with a great deal of overlapping membership. But none was more in the tradition of the Jews than the organization originally known as the Benevolent Ladies Aid Society. Working quietly, with an organization so loosely knit that each month saw a new acting president, the Ladies Aid Society had continued to help Jews in need. The Society had already been in existence some seventy years as of this writing. The mother of Mrs. Joseph N. Rosenberg, a Mrs. Blumenthal, and a Mrs. Segal were the moving spirits. Upon the death of
her mother, Mrs. Rosenberg found the treasury depleted. With the help of Mrs. David Gordon she managed to raise $100 through a raffle. The reactivated group now took the name of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society with Mrs. Daniel Polsky as president.

Upon reorganization it assumed the activities of a welfare agency and added to its responsibilities the visiting of hospitals, county homes, and other facilities where Jewish people were to be found. Many a poor worker's life was made more pleasant by the activities of these ladies. Still in existence in 1956, its only officer was Mrs. Raymond Clark, secretary. By the very nature of its work it operated without notice, without publicity, and with little public recognition.

Soon after the founding of the national organization, the Norwich Chapter of Hadassah was founded in October 1915 at a meeting held at the Wauregan Hotel. Somewhat later that year, Henrietta Szold spoke at a meeting held at the home of Mrs. Michael Levin. By 1955 the organization claimed 450 members.

Two other eleemosynary ladies' societies deserve mention. One emphasized charity at home, the other charity abroad. In December 1921 under the leadership of Mrs. Nathan Gilman, the Bozrahville Council of Jewish Women was organized, the purpose of which was to give aid to the poor of the rural areas. Isolated families were brought together by picnic suppers and other "socials". Americanization and night school classes were started. In 1933 the organization changed its name to the New London County Section of the National Council of Jewish Women and continued its activities, with such projects as scholarship funds, donations to the Backus Hospital, and War Bond Drives.

In 1939 the Norwich Chapter of the Women's American ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training) was formed. The emphasis of the organization is on training through ORT schools of Jews throughout the world who have been displaced or require help because of need.

Most of the ladies' societies mentioned are national in character and not particularly distinctive to Norwich. Yet the ladies of Norwich often anticipated the national activities of these organizations.

The men were as industrious as the ladies in forming organizations. The Order B’nai Zion was organized in 1910 under the auspices of Rabbi Max Stamm. In 1913 The Zionist Organization of America, based on the dream of Theodore Herzl, appealed to the Jews of Norwich, who proved receptive. The organization grew so effectively that
by 1938 it boasted the largest district membership proportionate to size in the United States.

The fall of 1921 saw the organization of the B’nai B’rith. A Mr. Dreyfus of New London met with J. W. Cadden and George Greenberger in the latter’s home to organize the order dedicated to Jewish and benevolent purposes. It was also to serve as an outlet for social activities. A prime concern was the combating of anti-semitism, which was becoming more prevalent in the unsettled period after World War I. The same nucleus of men that provided the impetus for the establishment of the Beth Jacob Synagogue came. Shortly after its inception B’nai B’rith was augmented by the ladies’ B’nai B’rith Auxiliary (1922).

The Order of B’rith Abraham was founded nationally on February 7, 1887 with the motto “Liberty, Unity, Justice.” In April 1900 Norwich Lodge Number 62 was initiated. Although its motto has the sound of political action and is reminiscent of the French Revolution of a century earlier, the organization was in reality a mutual benefit society. Its principal activity was the founding of a cemetery (also at Brewster’s Neck in Preston) and the payment at death of a sum of money to the survivors of the deceased. Why the Norwich Lodge of the Order of B’rith Abraham broke with its parent organization in 1905 is unknown to this writer. Perhaps one may conjecture that it was because of incompatibility of purpose. Norwich Lodge Number 62 reorganized into the Independent Order of B’rith Abraham. At that time it sold its cemetery to the Hebrew Benevolent Society and purchased its present area in Greenville. The split was foreshadowed in items in the Norwich Bulletin. Its issue of December 26, 1904 makes reference to “Norwich City Lodge No. 62, O.B.A.”; that of December 27, 1904 to “the Independent Lodge of Norwich, No. 309, IOBA”.*

More interesting than the burial societies is the Workmen’s Circle,

*Actually the Order of B’rith Abraham (OBA) was founded on June 12, 1859 in New York by German and Hungarian Jews. It later attracted and admitted Russian, Polish, and Romanian Jews. At the annual convention of 1887, twenty-seven delegates walked out of the meeting and founded the Independent Order of B’rith Abraham (IOBA). It is said that the delegates “were dissatisfied with the incompetence of the administration of the original order, and being unable to bring about a change from within, they decided to organize a new order with the same objectives and programs as the old one.” It eventually became the largest Jewish fraternal order in the world, but, never equalled B’nai B’rith in importance. The original OBA was dissolved in 1927. Whether or not language and cultural differences were a factor in the dichotomy is speculative. (Encyclopedia Judaica, Jerusalem, The MacMillan Company, N.Y.—The Keter Publishing House, Ltd., Jerusalem, 1971). Ed.
which held its first regular meeting in April 1907 in the library rooms of the Norwich Hebrew Education Association in what was then the Breed Theatre. The Russian pogroms which stimulated the exodus of the Jews in the late 19th and early part of the 20th centuries had forced many Jewish middle-class intellectuals to emigrate. These uprooted souls found themselves in an unhappy situation. Exploited by the woolen and cotton mills and the small arms factories then flourishing in Norwich, they banded together in mutual sympathy and fellowship. In accordance with their background they were strongly oriented to socialism, and during the Russian Revolution sent aid to the "workers" who were active in the Revolution. In addition they helped the immigrants, founded ORT and Histadrut,* and organized the "Peoples Relief Drive" during World War I. In keeping with their intellectual proclivities, they maintained a School for Jewish Studies with Isaac Safiah as teacher.

Although numerically never a strong organization, it embraced sooner or later almost everyone who felt the stirring of intellectualism or bitterness over the injustices of society. In 1933 its strength was considerably reduced when a group broke away to form the Norwich Jewish Fraternal Organization. Whatever the cause of the break may have been, the Circle's activities have remained moderate, confined to aiding the ill, to social activities, and to the burial of its deceased members. In 1940 its members had enough confidence in their association to purchase their own cemetery adjoining the I.O.B.A. grounds in Greenville.

The wives of members of the Workmen's Circle, following the usual course, formed an auxiliary in 1930. By 1955 the major share of their energies was devoted to securing aid for the State of Israel, supplementing the activities of the United Jewish Appeal and the State of Israel Bond Drive.

Several youth organizations also appeared and flourished variously. From 1920-25 there existed a Young Folks League. A YMHA** founded in 1925 was short-lived, and also a Mr. and Mrs. Club in 1950. A Young Judea group waxed and waned intermittently. More enduring was the Jewish Youth League, organized in 1941 by Rabbi Zev Nelson. In 1952 it changed its name to the United Synagogue Youth. A Jewish Boy Scout troop founded in 1931 continued to grow as did a Girl

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**Young Men's Hebrew Association.
Scout troop, which, however, had a temporary eclipse. Both, however, were disbanded during 1973.

It is notable that whatever the initial motive for the founding of several organizations, most evolved into organizations with charitable purposes. So the Jews of Norwich with their traditional sense of the continuity of history and of their responsiveness to need, organized to establish themselves firmly in their new environment and to aid friend and stranger. However, they also joined the service organizations of the community; they were welcomed and enjoyed membership in the Kiwanis, Lions, and Elks. Since their inception the Masons have had Jews on their membership rolls. Jews have found a welcome in cultural organizations such as the Norwich Symphony and the Norwich Choral Society, and in civic organizations such as the Community Chest. But in 1956 there were still organizations such as the Rotary and Commerce Club where only those Jews found acceptance whose connection with Jewry was tenuous.

In recent years the emergence of the Jew in public life has been more noticeable. Jews have been members of the city government and of the state’s legislature. Jewish physicians have been chiefs of services on the staff of the Backus Hospital in medicine; surgery; dental surgery; pediatrics; and ear, nose, and throat.

The rolls of the veterans’ organizations, too, are replete with the names of Jews; and the Cohen-Bokoff Post No. 93 is an organization of Jewish veterans. Since and including the First World War, some 262 Jews left Norwich to fight in the defense of their country through 1955. Of these, seven gave their lives. And, as in the Civil War, at least one Jew (Joseph Polsky) served in the United States Army during the Spanish-American War.

Undoubtedly the history of the Jews in Norwich is but a duplicate of the history of many communities, all of which, in the aggregate, make up the history of the Jew in the United States. In turn the history of the Jew in the United States is but one detail of the pattern of United States history. But it is of a host of such details that history is made. The late comer’s unhappiness in a comparatively new society, his loneliness, his lack of acceptance as a “foreigner”, the vestiges of religious discrimination that followed him to America, his struggle for acceptance, and his strong sense of destiny — these are the materials from which the novelist could still make exciting reading for a public always proud of the “American Dream”. Much already has been lost of the memory, the pain, and the elation of those who
have departed. This is a modest attempt to record some of the memories that still survive.

NOTES

1 Marcus, Jacob Rader: Early American Jewry, 2 vol., The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1951 and 1953.
3 a. Calkins: Early History of Norwich.
3 b. Connecticut State Library Files.
4 Norwich City Directories 1860, 1875.
5 Norwich City Directory 1870.
6 Norwich City Directory 1875.
7 In a letter to Mrs. I. Gordon, chairman of the Tercentenary Committee of Norwich, Fannie Hirsch, now Mrs. Frank Jacobs of New York City, disavowed any recollection of Jewish colleagues in education or of Jewish friends in her social relationships. The records on this point however, are quite clear.
8 Norwich Free Academy, the secondary school for Norwich.
9 Principal of the Norwich Free Academy.
10 Michael Levin, a personal interview.
12 Saul Alofsin, in a personal interview.
13 Letter from Mrs. Samuel L. Cohen; also the City Directory.
15 Mr. M. Levin, personal interview.
17 Saul Alofsin and Mrs. Anna D. Abelman, interviews.
18 First name unknown. Reported by M. Levin in a personal interview.
19 Mrs. M. Stamm, personal interview. The figure seems unduly large.
20 These and succeeding figures are from the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia.
21 M. Levin and Mrs. M. Stamm, interviews.
22 The Hebrew name defies exact translation and English phonetics.
23 Mrs. Max Stamm and Michael Levin, interviews.
APPENDIX A

1900 Directory all Jews Residing in Norwich.* (Heads of Families)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abelman, A.</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Mechanic St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alofsin, Ellis</td>
<td>Meats, groc.</td>
<td>N. High St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John B.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass, Morris</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauman, Edward</td>
<td>Prudential agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behrisch</td>
<td>Clothing store</td>
<td>Jail Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendett</td>
<td>Falls Mill</td>
<td>Yantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazar</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>Aqueduct St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm.</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinderman, Wolf</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>High St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom, John</td>
<td>Removed to N. Y.</td>
<td>Boswell Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>Aqueduct St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blumenthal, Meyer</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Central Ave.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blum, A.</td>
<td>Laundry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bluestein, Harry</td>
<td>Shetucket Co. employer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruckner, Meyer</td>
<td>Conf. store with John Sears</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budnick, Ephraim</td>
<td>Falls Mill</td>
<td>8 High St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cadden, Hanchen</td>
<td>Widow of Anselm</td>
<td>W. Thames St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julius</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark, Samuel</td>
<td>Cattle dealer</td>
<td>Talman St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohen, Bernard</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyman</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>Aqueduct St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cofman, Harris</td>
<td>Falls Mill</td>
<td>Yantic</td>
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<td>Cramer, A.</td>
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<td>School St.</td>
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<td>Eidelman, Isaac</td>
<td>Falls Co.</td>
<td>Yantic</td>
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<td>Jacob</td>
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<td>Eisenrich, Amrich</td>
<td>Richard Stove Co.</td>
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<td>Ehrlichman, Morris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etskowitz, Lazar</td>
<td>Painter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feldcorn, Abram</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
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<td>Tea Co.</td>
<td>W. Main St.</td>
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<td>Friedberg, Hyman</td>
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<td>Harris</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>N. Cove St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>N. Thames St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>N. Thames St.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Goldberg, David</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennan</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Maple Grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Talman St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldfaden, Moses</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>N. High St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goldstein, Sam</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>Cove St.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Where there was any doubt that the names were Jewish, they were omitted. This Appendix was attached to the original 1956 version of this history. Ed.
### APPENDIX A (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gordon, Aaron</td>
<td>Max Gordon &amp; Sons</td>
<td>N. High St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Max Gordon &amp; Sons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Widow of Joseph (1894, Joseph listed as Teacher)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ida F.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talman St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gotthelf, Bertha</td>
<td>Widow of Moses</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gotthelf &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milliners</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bertha &amp; Charles Hutzler</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
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<td>Gottschalk, J.</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graff, Adele</td>
<td>Widow of Aaron</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caspar</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenberg, Louis W.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handleman, Aaron</td>
<td>Handleman &amp; Pressman</td>
<td>Spring St.</td>
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<td>David</td>
<td>Peddler</td>
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</tr>
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This Directory lists a Fleischman & Co. Yeast Dealers on East Broad St.
Beryl and Chaya Segal, posing with a group of Emigrants at Orinin, Russia early in 1918 (Winter of 1917-1918).
A JEW IN THE RUSSIAN ARMY DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by Beryl Segal

ORININ AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR*

Orinin, where we were born and spent our youth, was a classical example of a small town in the Ukraine at the turn of the century. Our town was about twenty miles from the capital city Kamenets-Podolsk, in the Province of Podolia, the seat of the Gubernator, the Governor, and cultural and legal center of the state. It was also about ten miles from the Austrian border to the west.

Early in the morning a caravan of horse-drawn wagons, groaning under the weight of sacks of wheat, corn, barley, beans, sunflower seed, and flaxseed, and hordes of horses made their way westward toward the Austrian border. At the same time merchants in private single horse bridgkas** or in sleighs during wintertime, would drive out of Orinin to the business and industrial city of Kamenets-Podolsk.

But Orinin itself was a world apart, untouched by the advances in communications and industry of the new century, still surrounded by fertile fields and green woods, and waters teeming with fish.

We had no telephones, no telegraph, no electric power, no plumbing, no railroads, no newspaper. Our clothing was fitted by tailors, our shoes made by shoemakers, the furniture in our houses was built for us by master carpenters, and the very houses in which we lived were constructed of wood, which was plentiful in the forest around us.

With all the abundance of field and stream and forest, many could still afford only a hovel made of mud bricks and thatched roofs. Houses were heated in the wintertime by straw or wood, and straw mats on the floors were used for bedding. The poor were always

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*This series of anecdotes, suggested by a piece written by Mr. Segal for The Rhode Island Herald of September 20, 1970, is a continuation of his sketches titled “Orinin, My Shtetl in the Ukraine,” which appeared in the previous issue of these Notes (Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes 6:542-577, Nov. 1974). The combined series tell the story of the life and death of a Shetel. Mr. Segal may well have been the last future Rhode Islander to have lived in a Shtetl in tsarist times.

Although many of the definitions and explanations in the footnotes have already appeared in the original installment, they are repeated here for the convenience of the reader. Ed.

**Bridgka, a cabriolet, a one-horse, two-wheel, two-passenger vehicle. (Russian)
with us, and it was an accepted fact of life that one out of every ten households was supported by the Shtetl.*

Yet civilization was encroaching upon us step by step.

We knew, for instance, that Kamenets-Podolsk had a railroad station from which one could travel to all parts of the great Russian empire. But for some reason that railroad never reached the Shtetlech* around us. The universal means of transportation and travel was the horse, the Ukrainian horse, small and swift and patient.

There was a telephone in the Shtetl. Not far from town was the estate of Pan Rakovitch. He was a member of the Tzarist family and had a seat in the Royal Duma, or Advisory Council of the Tzar, for the State of Podolia. Pan Rakovitch was usually away from his estate. But for the few months of summer when he came back to Orinin the Government had strung a line of telephone poles from Kamenets-Podolsk along the Post Road, the Main Street of the Shtetl, to the estate of Pan Rakovitch. We, the children of the Shtetl, when we ran home from heder** evenings, would stop by these poles and listen to the hum of the wires, and we would say: “The Tzar is talking to Rakovitch!”

News of the world traveled slowly and unreliably. We depended on three sources:

1. Newspapers arrived from Warsaw or Vilna or Odessa, in Yiddish or Hebrew, usually two or three weeks late, but nobody cared about the dates. These newspapers came to subscribers, of whom we had four or five in the Shtetl, and from them we learned about all the pestilences, catastrophies, and plagues in the world, also of discoveries that seemed unbelievable to us. But mostly we read the newspapers for the literary masterpieces, old and new, translated and original, that appeared in their literary supplements. There was a local Russian newspaper published in Kamenets-Podolsk, but no one read it.

2. Merchants who ventured out into the world would come back after an absence of a few weeks and tell of the great wonders they had witnessed in the Big Cities. People listened to these tales, but they preferred to stay in the safety of Orinin.

3. Rumors that made the rounds of the Shtetl, highly exaggerated, passed from mouth to mouth, with everyone who told the rumor add-

*Shtetl: small town or village, diminutive of the German Stadt, meaning “city” or “town”. Shtetlech is the plural. (Yiddish)

**Heder: the school or room where Hebrew is taught, literally “room”. (Hebrew)
ing something of his own, while the listeners were assured that it came from a "reliable source".

In this way we learned about the beginning of the war later designated the First World War and destined to change the peace and quiet of the Shtetl.

One morning the caravan of grain and horses returned from the Austrian border cities bringing back the loads they were assigned to deliver. Merchants surrounded the wagons and listened to the bad news: The borders were closed; the roads were clogged with vehicles bringing men and ammunition to the front.

The causes of the war were never clearly understood in Orinin. They were too fantastic. A prince was assassinated. The Austrians rushed to avenge the death of the prince. But what did that have to do with Orinin? Why the sealing of the borders? Who was the prince that was the cause of it all? And what was that little Slavic country of whom nobody had ever heard? It was all too fantastic to comprehend. Little did they know that because of this bizarre incident a chain of events would unfold in the world whose ultimate consequences cannot yet be envisioned.

My father brought home a Hebrew newspaper "Hazman"*, and soon the house was filled with listeners eager to learn about the war. My younger brother was lifted atop a table, and with people standing all around he read the Hebrew at sight and translated into Yiddish the full story of the war. The listeners were more impressed by my brother's reading and translating of the Hebrew newspaper with such facility, than by the explanations of diplomacy, strategy, and international intrigue.

The only comfort the Shtetl had was that the Balkans were far away and the assassins and the victim were not Jews.

**The War Comes to Orinin**

Early one morning, as the people of the Shtetl emerged to greet a sunny day, they saw as they stood at their doorsteps twelve Austro-Hungarian hussars on horseback on the Shala,** a high stony outcropping on the western side of Orinin. They were resplendent in their high hats bedecked with feathers, in red uniforms decorated with gold braid, girded by shining swords worn on the left side, and in high black

*Hazman, "The Times". (Hebrew)
**Shala, a rocky hill. (Russian)
boots with spurs. The horses were restless as they stood on this high point overlooking the town. They, too, were dressed as if on parade, their bodies covered with multicolored coverlets underneath the saddles.

They remained motionless, man and beast, surveying the Shtetl with binoculars, and then, just as suddenly as they appeared, they turned their horses and disappeared toward the border in a cloud of dust. Then the rumors took over:

Rumor that the twelve hussars were sent by the Kaiser Franz Joseph of Austria to the Tzar of Russia offering him a peace treaty. The message was to be delivered to Pan Rakovitch, but the hussars got lost on the way.

Rumor that the twelve hussars were surveying Orinin to see whether it was big enough for the General Staff of the Austrian army.

Rumor that the hussars were Jews. A peasant who was hiding in the fields had heard them speak Yiddish.

Rumor that the hussars had come to Orinin to collect gold and silver contributed by Jews for the war, and that the gold and silver was delivered by the water carrier who was seen early in the morning at the same spot pretending to draw water from the well under the Skala.

The last rumor was soon repeated on many occasions. Variations of the rumor, all about gold and silver being given to the enemy, were soon told in many a town in the Ukraine. Someone in a high place saw to it that the rumor would be told and retold until it was accepted as authentic. Jews were disloyal. Jews were traitors to Mother Russia. Jews were on the side of the enemy, Austria-Hungary and Germany.

The policy of the Tzarist government towards Jews all through the war was based on this rumor. In the name of this rumor as the war progressed, Jews were evacuated from the border towns. Jews were asked to contribute their jewelry to the war chest to prove their loyalty. Jewish homes were searched, and all copper and silver utensils were confiscated and melted down into instruments of war.

But Jews were accustomed to be singled out by the authorities for persecution, for discrimination, and for blame for all failures and blunders in the land. We knew that the treatment of the Jews was a barometer of the success or failure of certain policies of the government. So the people of Orinin patiently bore the indignities, the mistrust, and the suspicions.
A Jew in the Russian Army During the First World War

Then came the day of the recruits.

Every year, during the fall season all males who had reached the age of twenty-one were drafted into the army. In peaceful times the recruits from the neighboring villages would gather in Orinin, the seat of the Volost, the County House, and after registering would descend on the Shtetl itching for a fight. Jews would close their stores early, and nobody would show his face outside until the local police had seen the last recruit out of town.

But this time, the first year of the war, the recruits were given a free hand. The police were nowhere to be found. The recruits swooped down on the Shtetl and in less than an hour wrought havoc in a number of stores. They beat up several people who happened to be outside, and they left a trail of blood, tears, and heartache for many in Orinin. The police then came and gathered them up and sent them off to Kamenets-Podolsk.

"Beat the Jews and save Russia" was their cry as they destroyed, tore to pieces, and vandalized everything that came under their hands. "The boys deserved their fun" was the lame excuse of the local police. The boys had their fun.

But bitterness grew in the hearts of the Jewish boys — helplessness, shame, humiliation, and hatred, and a burning desire for revenge. In the long evenings of the winter we would gather in secret places and plan how to avenge ourselves for the atrocities, and also how to defend the town from future attacks. We organized a secret militia for self-defense, and we patrolled the Shtetl at night.

The Shtetl was divided as to self-defense. The opposition argued that we would only incite the police, and the suspicion that we were helping the enemy would be given greater credence. Why do the Jews roam around at night? they would ask. Besides, they argued, what was done was done, and by next fall the war would be over, and the recruits would be kept in their place just as in previous years. We lived among the Ukrainians, and they were a peaceful people. Ignorant, but peaceful. The sooner we forgot about the "fun" their sons had had in the Shtetl, the better off we would be.

So the arguments ran, and also the hope that the war would soon be over. But the war was not over in a few months as the "experts" had predicted, and the self-defense was soon to prove futile in the light of what happened in Orinin.
THE DON COSSACKS*

The war was still far away, but the traffic of the war began to be felt by the town. Infantry and cavalry usually passed through Orinin at night. We would be awakened by the roar of the wagons and the rhythmic marching feet of soldiers. They passed by the Post Road up toward the Skala and to the border of Austria-Hungary.

Those of us who lived on the Post Road had a free show of the sights of war. We would stand by the windows and peep through the curtains in the darkened houses. We saw endless rows of infantry, the officers riding on horses, the sergeants by the side of the marching men, urging them on, issuing commands, while bringing up the rear were the corporals and the younger officers. In the morning we would describe the goings-on to the folks of the Shtetl, and we were the envy of those who lived on the other streets.

Soon the heavy artillery would come to town. It passed through during the day, and the two policemen of the Shtetl would go from house to house and warn us not to step out of the houses. Why the secrecy we could not understand. The artillery was pulled by horses, and the houses actually shook as the heavy armaments on wheels rumbled through Orinin, their guns pointing up toward the sky. Though warned not to show our faces on the streets, we could not resist and took a chance of standing behind closed doors and watching with bated breath as the might of Russia passed by.

Cossacks on horses marched through Orinin. They wore long black caftans, with rows of bullets sewed to the upper parts of the garments. They were armed with swords and rifles, and looked formidable with their long mustaches. As they rode by they sang of the girls they left behind, of the fields of standing corn they had not harvested, of the war that would not end until all the enemies of Mother Russia had been vanquished forever — all of this to the clip-clop of the thousands of hooves on the pavement of the Post Road and the swinging of their tall Cossack sheep caps. It was all very exciting, and we looked forward to the next night's adventure.

But one night we were awakened by the two policemen and told to clear out of one room because the Cossacks needed the space. They also requisitioned all of the stables in Orinin for their horses. No sooner were the policemen out of the house than the Cossacks were

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*The River Don flows through European Russia to the Sea of Azov. The Cossacks were an elite corps of Slavic horsemen from southern European Russia.
in and settled in the room. They ordered tea to be made and ransacked the kitchen for food. They were hungry and ate ravenously.

We found out that these were Don Cossacks, coming from the most fertile marshes and steppes of the Ukraine. They had utter disregard for private property or for other men's wives, and were contemptuous of discipline imposed by anybody but their own commanders.

At daybreak they spread out over the town and knocked on the doors of the closed stores. When they were opened, the Cossacks would pick out what they wanted and leave. Confronted by bills for the goods, they replied with laughter that shook the store: "The Father, the Tsar, will pay for everything. Send the bill to him."

In the beginning the storekeepers would go to the commander, who made his headquarters in Orinin, and present the bills for the goods. The commander would listen to them and say: "Just name those rascals and I will deal with them", and he would then laugh the same wild laugh as the Cossacks did.

The Don Cossacks went around town undisturbed. They drove their swift, small, wiry horses through crowds in the streets, and when they trampled someone to the ground they would give out with a wild shriek and continue through the streets of the Shtetl, their leather knouts whistling in the air. The young women and girls of Orinin disappeared into the cellars in fear of the Don Cossacks.

Sunday was a half-holiday in Orinin. Traditionally the peasants would come to town for prayers in the domed church, and at twelve noon the big bells would begin to ring and the stores would open for the peasants to buy their household needs: sugar and salt, herring and kapchanke,* and kerosene and matches, as well as ribbons and colored beads for the young ladies.

As soon as the church opened its doors at the end of the service, the Don Cossacks mixed with the peasants and began to make sport with the merchandise as if it were their own. They especially favored the young women and pressed on them goods they did not want. "Take, my beauties. We are leaving tomorrow. Take with our compliments."

They ransacked the stores. What they could not give away they spilled on the streets and threw underfoot or tore to pieces. At the largest store in town a Cossack stood at the door and gave out

*Kapchanke, a smoked dried fish with white meat. (Ukrainian)
goods until the shelves were empty. The storekeeper shouted: “Why? Why are you doing this?” He shouted and beat his head with both fists, crying like a madman.

Someone ran for the Father of the church, who came with his big crucifix dangling in front of him. At the sight of the Father the peasants slunk into the side streets and departed, and the Cossacks dispersed laughing. “Why, Father? I ask you Why?”, continued the merchant, and beat his head with his two fists.

That cry still rings in my ears after all these years.

Some of the goods were later recovered. The two policemen somehow knew where to go and what to look for. But the wounds remained. Jew and peasant could no longer look each other in the eye.

IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

During the Passover holiday two Don Cossacks decided to conduct a house-to-house search in Orinin. They went to the house of a butcher and came out dragging two boys after them. The two brothers, sons of the butcher, were home because of the holiday. Otherwise they would have been sent to the villages to buy sheep and cattle for their father’s shop.

Some say that the Don Cossacks were drunk, others that they were enraged because one of the boys was of military age and should not have been at home. Still others say that they seized the boys because they found a rifle in the house. But whatever the reason — as if the Don Cossacks needed a reason! — they tied the two boys to the saddles of their horses and tore down the Post Road, the two boys flailing their hands and feet as the horses sped on. And the Cossacks roared with joy. Outside the town the two boys were shot, and the Cossacks fled.

A pall of sadness suddenly descended upon Orinin. It was spring-time; a holiday spirit had pervaded the town; the townspeople were out on the streets, enjoying the first sunny days, as well as the holiday. And then they witnessed this outrage in broad daylight. They brought the bodies of the two boys home, and the whole town cried in unison with the parents.

Again they asked the same question: Why? For what reason? And by whose authority? Are the Don Cossacks free to do as they please? Is there no one to stay their hand?
No investigation was initiated. No witnesses were summoned. No punishment was meted out. The Jews of Orinin suddenly realized that their lives were at the mercy of the Cossacks. And what was worse — every peasant, if he were so inclined, could do to Jews whatever he pleased and not fear reprisal.

The town of Orinin suddenly shrunk and shriveled. It lived in a sea of hatred, or at best indifference to the fate of the few hundred households. Jews who lived in the surrounding villages took refuge in Orinin and told stories of horror. They abandoned their homes with only the clothes on their backs, leaving all their possessions behind, lucky to escape with their lives.

Those who were able packed their necessary belongings and left Orinin for Kamenets-Podolsk or towns even further on. The young people, especially the girls, disappeared overnight, some into the big cities, some in hiding at the houses of friendly townspeople of the Christian faith.

Cellars and attics became regular living quarters. At the first sight of a Cossack in town all women and children went either down to the cellar or up to the attic. In some houses blind rooms were made. They closed up the windows and barricaded the door with a clothes chest or a bookcase. In these windowless rooms they kept their children and grown daughters. Orinin was turned into a town of old people.

In the meantime incidents multiplied, rape and murders became a daily occurrence, and Jews took their lives into their hands walking the streets.

There were periods of quiet. As the Don Cossacks were advancing into Austria into the District of Galicia across the border from Orinin, the Jews of the surrounding towns breathed a sigh of relief. They were saddened, however, by the news that filtered in through travelers attached to the army. The towns in Galicia were utterly destroyed. The Jews of Galicia, like all Jews living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, lived a free life. They had never known fear of the army, and in fact many Jews had served in its armies. A fair number of them had distinguished themselves in the military and earned high honors. Only a few miles from the border of Russia, and what a difference!

The Don Cossacks were particularly ferocious in their devastation of the towns, both because they were in enemy territory and because they were settled by Jews. The Galician Jews had never seen a Cos-
sack in their lives. They were entirely unprepared for their onslaught. Prosperous thriving towns and cities of the District of Galicia were mercifully destroyed.

Other Cossacks came to Orinin. They were from the Caucasus and were mostly Moslems. They were surprised to be among people who, like themselves, did not eat pork. They were circumcised as were the Jews, and they found other similarities in their customs. They were very scrupulous in bathing their bodies, they did not steal, they honored elders, and had strong family ties. These Cossacks found the peasants in the village morally disgusting and their table manners atrocious. They therefore clung to the Jews with whom they felt a greater affinity, and punished severely anyone who attempted to vandalize Jewish property, because they reasoned that Cossacks are Cossacks and Jews are Jews, and should do as they pleased with their lives.

During the stay of these Cossacks, Tartars, Cherkessians (Circassians), and other tribes of the Caucasus, Orinin returned to normal. But the war was going badly for Austria. The Russians penetrated more and more deeply into the land, and the army quartered in Orinin received orders to advance and take up positions nearer to the front.

Jews in Russia had a peculiar resilience. As soon as a wave of pogroms and persecution had receded, they would quickly shake off its effects. When a ray of hope appeared, they would pick up their lives as their fathers had before them, bury their dead, replenish their goods, repair their workshops, and again face their neighbors.

Many Jews prospered from the war. The army needed supplies of everything. Communications with the interior of Russia were very poor. The army needed clothing and shoes, fodder for the horses, and food for the personnel. There was a brisk trade in horses and vehicles. Everybody was busy working for the army: tailors and shoemakers, wheelwrights, and smithies were particularly in demand. The merchants were given protection to go into the villages and buy grain for the men and horses. Saloons and beer houses sprang up overnight. The armies which came to Orinin after the first year of the war were of a different brand from those which had earlier passed through the town like a storm and took their toll.

Every once in a while, however, an incident occurred that reminded the Jews of Orinin that they lived on the rim of a volcano and that it could erupt at any moment.
THE DAY BEFORE YOM KIPPUR

*Yidden, Me’kapt!* ("Jews, they are grabbing us!").

That was a signal for all young people to hide. It was a common practice, even in the best days of the war, to seize people for work. They were sent away to the border villages to dig trenches, to clean the streets, or to transport materials of war. The story was always the same. After you had done your work, they gave you a receipt for the number of hours you put in, and you were told that the Commandant would pay so much per hour.

The Commandant was never to be found. He either was too busy, or he went away to Kaments-Podolsk, or he was sent to the front. The peasants were worst off. The army would impress them, confiscate their horses and wagons, and send them away for weeks at a time. They transported the wounded soldiers from the front lines to the interior of Russia.

The soldiers were out man-snatching early in the morning. At that time the town was empty except for older men who were not fit for hard work. In the afternoon, when the "grabbing" was over, the quota of men and wagons having been filled, it was safe again to walk the streets.

But on the day before Yom Kippur, when Jews were preparing for the most awesome day of the year, soldiers entered houses and ordered all males to take shovels and picks with them and gather at the quarters of the Commandant. They seized old men on their way to the Public Bath where they were purifying themselves for the holiday. They snatched youngsters who were home from heder, the Jewish school, for the holiday. They seized their teachers too. They took the artisans away from their work and the storekeepers from their shops. They even entered synagogues and snatched men at worship. In addition to picks and shovels the men were told to take along food for a few days, for no one knew how long the digging would take. The cries of women, the wailing of little children, the protestations of the older men were to no avail. "Yom Kippur? What is that? Tell it to the Commandant."

And so the soldiers rounded up the entire male population of Orinin and brought them to the headquarters. Did the Commandant know what Yom Kippur was? Was it a purposeful act? He must have known that Jews would not work on this fast day. What was the purpose of bringing all these elderly men to do the digging? And

*Yiddish.
youngsters eight or ten years old who were also caught in the net of the head-hunters. What could they possibly do?

We stood quietly on the lawn of the estate of Pan Sadowsky, where headquarters were located. Our hearts were heavy. We were angry and ashamed. Angry at whom? At the soldiers who did as they were ordered to do? At the Commandant who was nowhere to be seen? Ashamed at being herded like cattle and not even being told where we were going and what we were to do? An intense hatred filled my whole being, hatred for the army, for the Tzar, for the country, and a resolve to avenge myself for this spiteful atrocity.

How and on whom to avenge myself? I knew that it was helplessness that spoke within me. Tears welled up in my eyes, and I felt a lump in my throat when I looked at the old men standing on the lawn of the estate, with Orinin visible below in the valley. So near, yet so far. And Kol Nidrei?* On the night of Kol Nidrei with picks and shovels? Isn't there anyone to tell the Commandant what sort of a day Yom Kippur is?

Just then Reb Menasha came running up the hill, and, avoiding the soldiers standing on guard, he went straight to the Commandant. Reb Menasha was a well-to-do merchant in grain and flour. He rented the flour mill standing at the far end of the town from Pan Sadowsky. In his youth he had been a soldier and was stationed in Petrograd. His unit had performed for the Tzar and his family. He knew how to stand before the Commandant.

Reb Menasha explained to the Commandant what Yom Kippur meant to Jews, what a fast day is to Jews, and what a special night Kol Nidrei was. “Take me as a hostage”, he told the Commandant, “and let my people go home for the holiday. I guarantee that they will come to do the work you assigned to them after Yom Kippur.”

The Commandant who was of the Tzar's family (every Commandant was of the Tzar's family) argued that Jews are clever, that they are good at getting out of work, that this was the only chance to get them all. But at the end he said: “I want you to know that this is the first time in my life that I ever did any favor for Jews.” He ordered the soldiers to let the Jews go, and refused to take any hostages. He was sure that after Yom Kippur they would come back on their own.

On the appointed morning the young men of Orinin who were able to work presented themselves to the Commandant, and they were

*Kol Nidrei is the plaintiff prayer that ushers in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. (Aramaic)
sent to the Austrian border, where they dug trenches for several days. They came back bringing the news that the Russian army was deep into Galicia, but the number of killed and wounded was staggering. The Germans and the Austrians had long-range cannon, they said, and they took a heavy toll of the Russian army, which advanced on foot unprotected, and thus were perfect targets for the German-Austrian cannon.

The war had its bright side. As the armies moved deeper into Austria, life in Orinin became stabilized. The confiscation and the impressment for work had ceased. Orinin was in the hinterland. Jews became involved in supplying the army with food, clothing, and horses. The military were now of a different stamp. They were all of the reserves and milder men. Jews did business with the army. They suddenly discovered that Jews could get them what they wanted. And they paid for what they purchased. Jewish merchants were given identification cards and permits to travel wherever they needed to go. Some were even assigned soldiers to accompany them when they went out into the faraway villages.

A new type of Jew appeared in Orinin and in the surrounding towns. They were podrachiks, entrepreneurs, who rode around in army vehicles with soldiers at their side to buy anything and everything the peasants had to sell, and to confiscate whatever the army wanted.

In Orinin and in every town there were Jews who became rich, the new rich, as they were called. They lived dangerously. They were brash; they were daring. But they were the envy of the town.

At that time my turn came to go into the army. I was all of seventeen then.

“They are scraping the bottom of the barrel”, people of Orinin said to one another. “Germany beware”, the wits of the town would say with a wink. “Look who is coming to fight!”

ON THE RIVER VOLGA

My father engaged a peasant to take us to the draft board in Kamenets-Podolsk. He wanted to have us avoid the eyes and the remarks of passengers on the public conveyances. Though we had plenty to say to one another, we nevertheless sat quietly all the way and each thought his own thoughts, although we communicated silently.
The draft board was in a government building surrounded by a high stone wall with an iron gate at the entrance. Two soldiers stood guard at the gate and separated me from my father. And that was the end of our journey together. They did not even allow me to say goodbye to father. He stood at the gate and watched me go up to the building and disappear inside.

I met some boys from Orinin and some from other towns who were yeshivah* boys with me in Kamenets-Podolsk. But we didn't have much time to talk to one another. The army doctors worked like machines. We entered through one door, were asked a few questions, undressed, were given a physical examination, and were then sent out through another door. After a regulation haircut and a shower we were given uniforms and sent out to the drill field where we paired off according to height.

Towards evening we were taken to the railroad station and put in windowless wagons,** counted, and locked in. That was my first glimpse of a railroad and my first ride in a train.

We traveled three days and nights. In the middle of the night we stopped at a station, were told to get hot water from the boiling kettle that brewed at every station, and drove on. We sat on the floor of the wagon, some singing, some sleeping, and some brooding. It did not occur to us to ask where we were being taken, and anyway there was nobody to ask. The officers and soldiers who were sent with us recruits were riding in the front wagons, and we saw them only in the morning when they counted us and gave us food for the day and locked the doors.

We finally arrived at a town in the middle of the night and were glad to stretch our legs. We were taken to our barracks and were assigned bunks. We fell asleep immediately and were awakened by soldiers going from bunk to bunk and yelling and pulling us out of bed.

It was the first time in three days that we saw daylight. The sun was shining, and a breeze came up from somewhere. It was a steady breeze, and it cooled us off. Later we found out that the breeze came from the Volga River nearby. The famous Volga. There the river lay, wide and shimmering in the sun, down the hill from where our barracks were situated.

*Yeshivah was a Hebrew academy. (Hebrew)
**Continental usage for railroad freight cars.
We did not have time to feast our eyes on the legendary river of which we had heard so much in story and song. The drills began. Endless drills and marches and exercises and training. And inspections. Yes, and singing. An army marches on songs, we were told. And also running. Running and singing.

We were hustled out of the barracks early in the morning. We were lined up in front of an array of officers, and after an inspection we were taken to a field where corporals and sergeants ruled over us with an iron hand.

Face right. Face left. Present arms. Stop. Go. Stop. About face. Run. At ease. On the double. Stop. All morning long. Then there was lunch served from kitchens on wheels. We were lined up for this too. No pushing. No rushing. Everyone presented his mess utensils for inspection. These were part of the pack which we always carried. If a dish or utensil was found to be unclean, we would be taken out of the line and ordered to shine the offending soup bowl or spoon. If we were late for formation we went without lunch that day. A soldier must be punctual. After lunch we rested for a half hour and again to the marching and training.

In three months they were going to prepare us for the front. The wits of Orinin were right. Germans beware!

On Sundays we were allowed to go to the river. The Volga revealed itself in all its glory. At this point the river was so wide that we could not see the other side. The Volga constantly changed images as its waves splashed by. Patches of white and patches of brown and patches of gold as the sun was caught on the crest of a wave.

I cannot remember a single incident of race discrimination in the barracks. Neither the soldiers nor the officers ever made an anti-Jewish remark. The period of training passed by without any unpleasantness. On the other hand, the few Jews who were in our company were chosen for office duty, hospital duty, or services in the officers' mess hall. I was not so lucky. It was my duty to stand guard at the officers' club every other night. The officers of the regiment gathered every night in a big mansion with spacious gardens, located near the edge of the barracks. At nightfall we were stationed around the officers' club and kept saluting every officer who passed through the gates.

We saluted and kept up our vigil. We did not talk to one another, although we were only a few paces apart. Nor were we to react to what was going on inside the gardens. The women had been there
before our arrival. After they ate and drank, the officers made merry with the women. Cries and laughter reached our ears through the fence around the gardens, and shouts of conquest punctuated by screams of delight made our spines tingle. But soon the lights in the club went out, and we were returned to the barracks, and not a word was said by us. Speak only when you are spoken to, was the rule.

The worst part of training was stabbing the belly of a straw-stuffed effigy with our bayonets. In turn each of us faced the effigy and with a scream of triumph rushed toward it and pierced the “Germanetz”, the German.

All this time we practiced with unloaded weapons. We had our bayonets mounted on empty rifles and pretended they were real arms. We learned to “load” and “unload” the rifles when the order was given to “present arms”. But on the last week we were given ammunition and were taken for rifle practice. We passed by the hanging effigies and down an incline in the field. There we came upon a rifle range with its target boards painted with concentric circles, each with a bullseye in the center.

We knew that the time had come when we were considered to be soldiers, not just the recruits we really were. Now we marched, singing, heads up, with bodies straight, not slouching as we had done only three short months ago.

We boarded railroad wagons with long benches instead of separate seats. We needed space, since each of us carried the regulation knapsack and the rifle which we were to keep near us for the duration of the war.

“You are married to your rifles”, we were admonished by our mentor. “This is your best friend!” And, believe it or not, we came to look upon the rifle as part of us, never to be separated from us.

We traveled again for three days, and when we alighted and marched through a town, one much like Orinin, we were a sight to see. People stood on both sides of the streets as we passed by singing, our rifles slung on our left shoulders, our right hands swinging back and forth, our uniforms of light green color, heads held high and our eyes looking straight ahead. The wits of Orinin should have seen us.

From this point we marched to the front lines. Wagons carried our rifles and sacks, since the front lines were still quite a distance. After a day’s march we caught up with our equipment and made ready for the night. There were few houses in sight. We were now in hilly country.
Where we were and where we were going nobody knew. We were admonished not to ask questions. A good soldier, we were told, attends to his own business. He leaves the why, when, and wherefore to others. There is a higher-up who knows all the answers.

But rumors still circulated. On the other side of the mountains, one rumor went, was the city of Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, and we were headed for that city. Lemberg was well known to me. When someone went abroad from Orinin to Lemberg, he came back speaking German, dressed in European clothes, and forever yearning to return again to Lemberg. It was the seat of learning, the symbol of European culture, also the city of great contrasts — great rabbis and Hasidic rebbes, and also great apikorsim, unbelievers and devotees of enlightenment. But others claimed that we were not going to Lemberg at all. We were on the way to Czernowitz, a renowned big city in Bucovina and that the city was just across the hills.

It turned out that we were in the Carpathian Mountains, in a Slav country under Austrian rule. As everywhere in that empire the official tongue was German. The people, however, spoke Slovakian, while the Jews were adept in three languages and spoke Hungarian in addition.

We had not yet tasted the fear of battle, of defeat, or victory. We did not even hear the thunder of the big guns. Nor had we had a glimpse of an enemy soldier. We were stationed on one of the hills of the Carpathian mountain chain. Below us was a small swift stream, and on the other shore of the stream was enemy country. Up on the hill opposite us, they said, were trenches of the Austrian army. But we did not bother them, and they ignored us. Each morning we were sent out on patrol along the stream, and, when we were relieved by another detail of soldiers, we went back to our trenches prepared by a company of soldiers who had occupied them earlier. We were kept busy cleaning our rifles, scouring our bayonets, and mending our clothes. We were bored and craved for action. The evenings were magnificent in the Carpathian Mountains. We would leave our trenches and make fires on the protected sides of the hills. We would stretch out on the ground and sing songs of Mother Russia, of the girls we left at home, of the birch tree that grew in the field and the girl who pined away near it, and of the great prowess of the men in wars of old.

The officers, it seems, did not deem it necessary to be among us. They came only in the morning for the roll call, and then departed.
to a village a mile or so away from the front line. The corporals and the sergeants, on the other hand, became closer to us, mingled with us, ate with us, and slept with us in the trenches, which, it must be said, were furnished by those who had preceded us with all the “conveniences” of home.

So we sat in our trenches, and to this day I don’t know why this front was neglected or forgotten or ignored for weeks on end, and why neither the Russian nor the Austrian army tried to cross this narrow, shallow, playful little mountain stream.

**Yom Kippur in a Cave**

Naked children would come out of a cave and hold out their hands for a penny or two. Their mother would hide in the doorway of the cave and beckon to us with one finger. She was young, and her husband had gone to war. She lived by begging or by reading palms. We later learned that the Carpathian Mountains were full of such caves.

Some soldiers took off for the night to one of the caves and came back at the crack of dawn, telling us of the wonders of the gypsy cave villages in the mountains. The caves were cool in the summer and were well protected from the cold in the winter. The gypsies survived by making little trinkets, which they sold to Jews in the town near the bend of the river. This was the only time we had heard mention of Jews.

Only a week before I had received a letter from home in which my father told me that the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, were approaching, and that he had checked the dates for me. At the campfire one evening we asked our sergeant for passes to go across the river for the holidays. He thought we were crazy. “Are you out of your minds?” cried the sergeant. “Across the river? You want to go into enemy territory?” “But the gypsy woman told us that she goes there to buy and sell,” we replied. “Impossible,” said the sergeant.

But we inquired again, and sure enough many gypsy women crossed the stream to work and to trade in the little town. We went up to the bend one day and saw the streets of the town across the stream. We also spied a shul* in the midst of the houses. It was a big wooden building with a Mogen David** on top of the roof.

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*Shul, synagogue, from the German Schule, “school”. (Yiddish)

**Mogen David, literally “Shield of David”, refers to the six-pointed Star of David. (Hebrew)
There were five Jews in our platoon, and one of the five served in the office. He was a corporal, though he did not have any soldiers under him. For a long time we did not know he was a Jew. He did not fraternize with us, and we did not seek his companionship. One evening he came to us and asked: “Do you boys know that our Days of Awe are coming?” “Yes, we know. We also know that Jews live on the other side of the stream. But how can we go across?” “Leave that to me”, said the corporal.

He then told us that the Austrians had retreated, but that we still awaited orders to occupy the village. He also told us that there was a wooden bridge across the stream and that we, the Russians, had a guard standing there day and night, but that there was no one on the other end of the bridge.

We went to the bridge and were stopped by a sentry. We spoke the secret code word, and he allowed us to stay at the bridge and observe. The streets of the town came down to the very shores of the stream. The stream curved at that place and became a river. We saw Jews coming and going on the streets. We could almost hear their voices wafted across the water by a breeze. We asked the sentry whether people from the town ever came across the bridge. He told us that the gypsies from the caves crossed the stream daily. He knew them and didn't interfere with them. “This is no war”, explained the sentry. “We waste our time here.”

On the eve of Rosh Hashanah the corporal came carrying a permit from his staff officer, and we started out toward the bridge and crossed it. To our disappointment we found the town deserted. We were puzzled, but not seeing anyone of whom to ask questions we returned to our side of the bridge.

The next night I went out on patrol. I climbed a high peak of a mountain, and from there I had a full view of the bridge and the town. All the houses were dark. I could make out the synagogue among the houses, and there too not a light was burning.

But on the eve of Yom Kippur I noticed a startling movement of people toward a mountainside near which the town was spread out. From a distance it seemed that the houses were overshadowed by the mountain. The people, especially women and young children, carried bundles and disappeared inside the mountain.

I alerted my friends in the platoon. We crossed the bridge and wandered in the deserted little town. This time we knocked on doors, but there was no answer. We went to the synagogue, and there we
found an older man and his young son carrying something in their hands. From the way the old man hugged his burden I knew what it was. He was carrying a *Torah* covered with a linen sheet. He was startled. His son began to run. We spoke to them in Yiddish. The boy came back to listen to Russian soldiers speaking Yiddish. We told them why we had come over from the other side, and asked them to let us be with them for the Day of Atonement.

On the way out of the synagogue the old man told us to follow him quietly. He led us to a cave in the side of the mountain. When we reached the entrance of the cave, he told us to stay outside and he went in alone. We looked around us at the silent town, at the brooding mountain, and the gurgling stream that meandered through the mountains. A feeling of deep awe and fear came over us. Awe and loneliness. I thought of the *Kol Nidrei* nights at home when I was a child. The corporal whispered as if talking to himself: "This is the first Yom Kippur I ever spent away from home."

He had told us before that his father was a cantor, and that he himself was to be a singer. He was about to go to a cantorial school when he was called up to service. He would continue singing if ever he returned.

The old man came out and beckoned to us. We stood speechless at the entrance. The cave was quite spacious. Long benches were lined against the walls of the cave. At the eastern wall stood a make-shift Holy Ark covered with white linen curtains. Candles were burning on the ground in a corner of the cave. They were protected from sight by a low wall of rocks. There were about twenty men and women in the cave, men and women separated, each holding a prayerbook close to his eyes. There were two lights only at the reader's desk. We were told later that lights were forbidden by the authorities lest they direct the enemy, meaning the Russian army, to the town. Now that the Austrian army had abandoned the town, they still obeyed that law out of force of habit. The rich inhabitants had left town, and those who remained were the poor and the old. They would not talk of their experiences with the Russian army.

A man dressed in a white *kittel* came forward to a platform in front of the improvised Holy Ark and spoke in hushed tones to the

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*Torah*, literally "teaching", "guidance", or "doctrine". It has come to mean The Law, i.e., the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, or in turn the Scroll containing the Five Books of Moses. (Hebrew)

*Kittel* is the white garment traditionally worn by members of the congregation during prayer on the High Holidays. (Hebrew)
assembled people. He told them that we were Jewish soldiers stationed across the river, that we came to pray with them on Yom Kippur, and that one of us was a *hazan’s** son and would chant *Kol Nidrei*.

The corporal chanted, and everyone, including ourselves, wept. Some women cried out aloud, no doubt remembering their sons who were in the battlefields at that very moment. The *hazan’s* son chanted the ancient melody with such sweetness and so much feeling in that *shul* in a cave in the Carpathian Mountains that it brought tears to the eyes of every man and woman.

After the service the people surrounded us, and besieged us with questions, such as: When will the war end? How far will the Russ go? Is it true that Jews are suffering in Russia? An old man sidled up to the Corporal and asked: “When will the Messiah come?”

We went back silently to the Russian side, each with his own thoughts, each with his own memories of a childhood that would never come back.

**AT THE FRONT LINES**

The order to move on finally came to our division. One morning we were lined up as usual for the roll call, and the officer in charge of the regiment announced that we would move to occupy the next mountain ridge at night. The announcement was received with relief, anxiety, and fear. Relief because we were tired of languishing there in one place, doing nothing but eating, drinking, and attending to our rifles. Anxiety because we still did not know where we were or what our task was to be after we crossed the next mountain. Fear because once we were on the front line we could expect anything to happen to us.

But there was also curiosity. What did the beyond look like? What new vistas would be revealed when we crossed the mountain? Our imaginations ran wild. Soon the fears, anxieties, and curiosity were all abated.

The regiment crossed the river without incident. We rounded the mountain and came to a pass and still another stream. Then toward evening we arrived at another town, also nestling in still another mountain and also on the shore of a stream.

We were tired from the long hike on narrow paths, strewn with rocks and boulders. We were immediately installed in the houses

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**Hazan** means cantor. He sings long passages of the liturgy. *(Hebrew)*
of the townspeople. Some of the houses were deserted; in these cases we occupied the whole house. Others were inhabited; there the commander would assign two or three soldiers to each house, leaving one room for the owner.

We fell asleep as soon as our heads touched the pillows. We did not see the owners of the house we were in, but we knew that they were somewhere nearby. We could tell by the neatness of the house and by the smell in the room, the smell of food that had recently been cooked in the kitchen. I could also tell that this house belonged to a Jew. I saw a mezuzah* on the doorframe, books in a bookcase by the wall, and candle holders on top of the mantle.

In the darkness that came over the house at dusk, I could hear someone moving in the kitchen. I held my breath when I saw an elderly man taking the candle holders from the mantle and tucking them into a sack filled with things he took from the kitchen.

I greeted him, and he scurried into the adjoining room. Then I spoke to him in Yiddish so as not to frighten him. I am a Jew, I said. He didn't have to be afraid in his own house. He could take anything he wanted.

Upon hearing Yiddish spoken the elderly man brightened, and he explained to me that it was Friday evening. He had come to take his wife's candle holders to bless the light for Shabos** and also to pick up a few things for the Sabbath meal. We came unexpectedly, and he did not have time to set the table for the meal.

I helped him carry the bundle of food, and he led the way to a back room which was completely windowless and dark. He called out to someone: “We have a guest for Shabos, Hannah. A Russian soldier who speaks Yiddish.”

Hannah immediately blessed the candles, and the room was lit. She greeted me with “Good Shabos”, and we sat down on the sofa, the only piece of furniture in the room. I left the room and came back carrying two chairs and a round table. The housewife covered the table with a white tablecloth. I placed the hale† and the candles on it, and we were ready for the Shabos.

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*Mezuzah, literally “doorpost”: small parchments on which are inscribed the first two paragraphs of the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). Rolled tightly, it is placed in a small case or capsule and attached to the doorpost. Shema means “Hear”, from “Hear, O Israel”.

**Shabos, the Sabbath (Yiddish) from the Hebrew Shabbat.

†Hale, a braided loaf of white bread, usually prepared for the Sabbath or Holy Days. (Hebrew)
The two elderly folk asked me about my home and about the war, and told me that so far no one had touched them. The rich people, of course, left the town when the Austrian soldiers retreated. But they were not rich, so they remained.

It was late when I returned to my bed. We could not break away. I told them what my father did for a living, what I did before the war, and how the Jews lived in Russia.

It was quite a while since I had heard the kiddush* being chanted, the blessing over ḥale being said, and the zmiroth** the Songs of Shabos, being sung at the table. What surprised me was the similarity of the Shabos customs and traditions in my home and here. I was struck by the change that came over the elderly pair as soon as the candles were lit and the blessing pronounced over them. Just as at home, I thought. It seemed as if I had known them before. The food had the same flavor as the dishes which my mother had served. Poor as they were, they were transformed into different people, he with his black Shabos kaftan and round Kopelush,† and she with a calico dress and silk kerchief.

I was just as anxious to talk with them as they were with me. Tired as I was, I asked them about their family. They told me that they had two sons. One was at the Russian front, and one was somewhere in Germany. They did not know the name of the city because he was on some secret army project. Now they were cut off from them, because the town and indeed the entire district had been abandoned, though they could not understand the reasons why.

In the days before the war people would come to the town from far and wide for summer vacation. Half of the townspeople were employed in providing for the summer guests. Every house rented a room or two to the city folks.

There was also a rebe who resided in town. His Hasidim‡ would come to be with him on Shabos and for holidays. The old man was a gabbai, a traveling collector for the rebe in the towns scattered in the Carpathian Mountains.

Early in the morning we started on our march to another town, across another mountain, searching for the Austrian army. When my platoon passed by the home of my hosts, I saw them standing by the

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* Kiddush, the prayer and ceremony that sanctifies the Sabbath and Jewish holy days. (Hebrew)
** Zmiroth, hymns. (Hebrew)
† Kopelush, a broad-brimmed hat. (Yiddish)
‡ Hasidim, members of a pious Orthodox sect originating in Eastern Europe in the Eighteenth Century. (Hebrew)
window waving at me and Hannah wiping a tear from her eyes. Before we separated the night before the old Jew took me to a cupboard and told me to take a kameia, a coin, from a drawer. “It is not money,” the Jew explained to me. “These are kameias that the rebbe* gave to the young men who went to war. They were all blessed by the tzaddik* himself. The kameia will guard you all through the war, and you will come back in good health to your father and mother.”

I picked a coin the size of an American nickel with a hole punched at the outer rim and put it in my pocket. It was supposed to be a charm to be worn on a string around one’s neck or in a hidden place in one’s uniform. I felt for the kameia in my pocket and felt reassured. I knew I had the best wishes of the two charming old people.

We soon came to the next town, and everywhere we heard the same story. The Austrian army had retreated, and half the town had left with them for fear of the Russians. We were still to see a single enemy soldier.

Then it suddenly became clear. The Austrians wanted to straighten out their lines. They couldn’t do it in the mountains, so they abandoned them. It was not long before we heard the boom of heavy cannon. The front line was now not far from us.

The Austrians made their last stand on one hill of the mountain range. We dug in on the opposite hill. This was the last mountain in the Carpathians. After this the ground leveled out, and the roads were wide and straight. We were instructed to look out for camouflaged soldiers crawling up the mountain where we were located. Every night we sent men out on patrol. We stalked between the trees, stopped, looked around, and continued on, keeping the appointed distance between patrols. At night we rested, and in the morning we were awakened by the boom of the enemy cannon and the answer of our big guns. We were terrified, but the boom of the cannon was better than the silence between rounds. Each side tried to soften up the other, so we were told. Until the enemy ceased sending his cannon messages to us, we would not move from our dugouts.

*Rebbe (rabbi) was the term used by the Hasidic Jews for their spiritual leader. Rav or Rov was used by the non-Hasidic community. Rabbi is Hebrew for “my master”, rau means “great”. Rebbe is a corruption of the Hebrew rabbi (pronounced rah-bee), angelized to rabbi. The Hasidic rebbe, though well-grounded in learning, did not necessarily have formal ordination from an academy or Yeshivah. Reb was also used as a title — a shortened form of rebbe. The subtle differences and apparent interchangeability of these terms is confusing, but probably not too important. Tzaddik means “a righteous man”. He embodied the ideals of moral and religious perfection. Among the Hasidim, as compared to the non-Hasidic Jews, he went to more extreme lengths of piety and devotion. (All of the above Hebrew)
enemy wanted us to come out and fight, but we would weaken him by holding on to our positions. In the meantime between cannon shots we could count the minutes it took to answer the big guns from our side. We ducked and then raised our heads. Sometimes when we saw or thought we saw something moving between the trees we aimed our rifles at the spot. We were shooting blindly. No one was allowed to stand up and take aim.

Who knows what I was shooting at? Were they enemy soldiers? Women scraping together a meal? Woodsmen returning home? Or just figments of our imagination? Our rifles cracked at no one in particular. I hoped there was no one there.

The cannon fire grew in intensity and accuracy. The trench in which we were crouching came under increasingly accurate fire. Since we had only one line of trenches, we could not run for cover to another trench. Nor could we retreat to the rear, because we were threatened either with court-marshal, which meant being shot to death, or with being shot immediately by any officer who caught us running away from the firing. But staying in the trenches was certain death sooner or later.

We counted the dead and carted away the wounded in confiscated wagons, sending them to the rear. The heavily wounded wailed as the wagons bumped over ruts. Surrounding the wagons were the bandaged who could walk. They held on to the wagons with one hand and trudged along. We were envious of the lightly wounded. They would go for a while to a hospital which was a long way from the front lines. Maybe they would never return to the front.

People are never content. Before, we were complaining of the boredom. We wanted action. Well, we had action. We cursed the rising sun, for with the rising of the sun the cannons began their bombardment. The nights at least were quiet. We slept standing up, leaning against the wall of the dugout fully dressed, our rifles at the alert. We warned one another of the coming of the sergeant. Woe to him who did not wake up in time.

Some nights when it was quiet the sergeant allowed us to sprawl out on the ground and assigned watches while the rest of us slept. But even then we could not put away our guns. We were married to the guns.

We now knew what life in the front line was like.

For several days we were spared the boom of the big guns. We were puzzled, but we had no one of whom we could ask questions.
Rumors took over. One rumor had it that the enemy had retreated and that we would soon pursue him. Another rumor was to the effect that we were surrounded and that one day soon we would all be taken prisoner. Peasants who were taken prisoner by our troops and brought to our headquarters, however, told of regrouping of forces on the mountain facing us, and reported that the Austrians had been sent to fight on another front while German regiments would occupy their positions.

On one such night I was sent out to patrol a stretch of mountain in front of our platoon. Patrols were not burdened with knapsacks and ammunition and carried only a rifle and one round of ammunition. They were to report anything suspicious to the corporal. The patrol never ventured more than fifteen or twenty feet away from the trenches. He was to be the eyes and ears of the platoon.

I crawled out of the trench on my belly, looked around, perked up my ears, and made it to a nearby tree. I looked about again, listened once more, and then, to the next tree. The night was dark, and the stillness was pregnant with rustles and murmurs and fear. I was on the ground for a while, and then again stood near a tree. I did not know when and why, but I found myself crawling down the crest of the mountain. My heart began to beat fast. Perspiration covered my body. I got up and wanted to run back to my platoon. Then it happened. A shout to stop. The rifle snatched from my hands. And a face and a voice from nowhere ordering me to go with him quietly.

It was all so orderly and gentlemanly. We were told that the Germans tortured their prisoners. They gored them with their bayonets and left them to rot in the forest. My first impulse was to run and yell. But the Germans held my arms, and running was out of the question. They warned me not to raise my voice or I would be silenced forever.

That was the only harsh word I heard, but even that was said gently. No pushing, no shoving, no cursing, no beating as I had expected.

I was led down the mountain, along a narrow path, during which time the two German soldiers walked one in front and one in back of me. The stillness was terrifying. No one spoke a word. I observed the man ahead of me. He was dressed in a long coat of green color. He was not encumbered by a rifle and bayonet, only a short knife in a leather sheath hung at his side and a revolver which he was carrying.
on the ready. The man in back of me carried my rifle and ammunition.

Many thoughts crowded my mind, and trivial they were. Things I did in my childhood, stories I had heard at the campfire came racing one after another. These thoughts were without any logic, without reason. I should have been thinking of my platoon, of the reaction of my buddies to my absence, of the search party they must have sent out to find me. None of these things entered my mind as we walked silently along the path and came to a village. The crowing of a rooster and the barking of dogs sharpened my senses. The little houses were silhouetted on the horizon.

We stopped at a newly erected wooden office building.

IN ENEMY COUNTRY

With the coming of daybreak we looked around us. Frightened and disheartened we were huddled in a large waiting room. I say “we” because the room was full of Russian soldiers, the crop of only one night. We heard voices coming from the rooms nearby. Voices and laughter. I was amazed at the degree of my understanding of what was spoken in the closed rooms. They were talking in German, a language similar to my own tongue.

One by one we were taken into the rooms which opened into the waiting room. I was asked to identify my regiment, my division, and my commanding officer. The interpreter standing in the room whispered something to the inquiring officer. He brightened up and spoke directly to me. He asked in German, and I answered in Yiddish. He asked where I came from, and he informed me that he had once been in Kaments-Podolsk, but would not go into detail. He asked for my occupation, and I was at a loss to say what it was. I did nothing. Was I a student? It did occur to me that the yeshivah was a school and I a student. No, I couldn’t qualify for a government school. Why? Because I was Jewish. What does this have to do with being a student? In Russia, Jews are excluded from government schools, except in very small numbers, and for that you need money. Why money? Because you have to go to Kamenets-Podolsk. In my town we had no gymnasium to prepare me for college.

That was a revelation to the officer and to the interpreter. They began to talk to one another excitedly. What would I do when I returned from the war? I hesitated, because I had really never thought about it.
The officer gave me a number in a sealed envelope and dismissed me. He put his arm around my shoulder and said: "When we come to your country we will send you to school." I came out into the yard and found a whole Russian army assembled there. Toward noon we were fed and sent off to a waiting train.

The rumble of the train, the experiences of the previous night, the sun shining in our eyes, and the rolling fields that flashed by through the windows left me feeling at once depressed and exhilarated. We still did not know where we were, whither we were being taken, or what was to become of us.

The train rolled into a city, and we saw a sign on the roof of the station with the words: MARMORESH-SEGET.

We alighted from the train and were assembled at the railroad tracks. The people spoke in a tongue I could not understand. The officers in charge at the station collected our envelopes and separated us into small groups. I repeatedly heard the word Hust. After an hour or so we arrived at a city named Hust in Hungary. All the prisoners in our coach were taken out, and the train rolled on.

We were put in charge of elderly soldiers, aged forty-five and over. To our eyes they looked ancient. One of them was the spokesman. He addressed us in Ukrainian. It was Ukrainian with a Yiddish accent. It turned out that he was from Tarnopol, a town not far from my Shtetl, where the people spoke German, Yiddish, and Ukrainian. He also spoke Hungarian very poorly, as I later discovered. He was quite clearly a Jew.

A group of ten from among twenty-five men were taken to a brick building that looked tremendous in my eyes. It was a marvel of construction to the mind of a boy from a Shtetl where all the houses were one story abodes, built of lumber or clay. The red three-story building had windows glistening in the sun and was surrounded by a wrought iron fence. It was a school building, we were told, now converted to a hospital. We were assigned to work in the hospital, some to help as orderlies, others to work in the kitchen. I was a cook's assistant. My job consisted of peeling potatoes and standing over the big kettle and mixing the contents with a wooden ladle.

I didn't stay at this work assignment very long. An officer, also middle aged, came to the kitchen and asked me to follow him. I was to be a storekeeper for the food and utensils requisitioned by the hospital. The store, or warehouse, was outside the hospital compound,
A few houses away, and I was entirely on my own all day long. The officer came in for a few minutes, asked me how I was doing, and, smiling at me, left. He insisted on calling me Albert, and this was my name all through my captivity. Evenings he called upon me to come to the officers’ mess and help in serving supper to the officers. It was there that I learned the news of the war. I heard that the Russian army had suffered great losses, that the armies were in retreat, and for the first time in my life I heard the word Revolution! My officer was from the Tyrolian Mountains and knew no Hungarian. It so happened that I had picked up enough of the language to serve as an “interpreter” between the kitchen help and the officer. He often stayed late in the mess room and debated with another officer, who was Jewish, the subtleties of Theses and Antitheses, which I did not understand but listened to with great avidity. It sounded to me like the discussions in the Talmud in which my mind had been well trained.

The Hush days were the happiest of my captivity. No letters reached me from home, nor had I received any mail since I had left for the front lines. I was free to go to private homes in the evening. A family that lived next door to the hospital was particularly hospitable. They were, in fact, Jews. The man was a shoemaker, and his daughter, about my age, worked somewhere in the city. The demand for help was great everywhere. It was strange to speak in Yiddish to the family and to the neighbors who came to look at me. That never ceased to astonish me. The prayers on Yom Kippur in the cave had been the same as in my home town. The kiddush and candle lighting and the dishes were also the same as in my parents’ home. And now I sat and talked to Hungarian Jews in my native language. They understood me and I understood them. A young woman who lived in the neighborhood came to tell me her husband had been taken prisoner by the Russians and was now in Kiev. She thought that I would know of Kiev since it was the capital of the Ukraine, and was surprised when she heard that I had never left my Shtetl until I was taken into the army. The freedom of travel and the ease of travel were things I could not cease to marvel at in this land of my captivity.

One day I was called back to the hospital and found the Jew from Galicia standing, wrapped in his tallis* and tefillin**, and praying. He motioned to me to sit down and when he was through davenen†

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*Tallis, prayer shawl. (Hebrew)
**Tefillin, phylacteries. (Hebrew)
†Daven, to pray. (Yiddish, possibly from the French “office divin”. Davenen is the participle.)
informed me that we were being sent to a camp near the Russian border. If I had sechel,* “sense enough,” I would slip out of camp and go home. He also told me that the Russian army was in disarray, and thousands of soldiers were giving themselves up to the German army.

We parted and promised to write to each other, which we never did. But I still remember the Jew with the red trimmed beard as he stood straight as a rod with only his head swaying back and forth as he prayed, with his tallis covering his whole body.

We were brought to a barracks in the middle of a field and assigned bunks. And that was all we saw of our captors. We were not supervised. We were not given any duties to perform. We were left to our own resources.

Every morning somebody was missing. It was whispered around that prisoners were going home. We were near the Bessarabian border, and I knew that Bessarabia was the state next to Podolia, my own state.

One morning when I stepped out of the barracks, I saw a lorry bringing meat for our kitchen, which was in a lean-to shack. It was horse meat and was thrown up onto the roof of the lean-to where flies immediately attacked the red, lean sides of the animals. My stomach turned, and I went to the common out-house and vomited.

That night three of us agreed to leave the camp. Two took provisions, and I was to carry the spoons and forks and plates. We agreed to meet at a clump of trees that could be seen on the horizon. There was no need for all our caution. No one pursued us. No one was standing guard at the barracks. I made my way to the trees, but found not a trace of my companions. I waited under the tree for a while and was elated when I heard a noise, but disappointed when it was only the wind in the trees. I waited impatiently, but no one showed up. I continued toward the sun, which began to come up on the horizon. Not a soul came my way. At a distance I saw what looked like a village. I thought I heard the crow of a rooster. The terrain was flat, and there were patches of plowed fields. Suddenly the village was before me. I was at the edge of the village, and a man came out of his house on his way to the barn. I greeted him in Ukrainian, and he answered, “God be with you”. I asked him where I was. He looked me over and beckoned me to come into the house and said

*Sechel, native good sense, common sense, or judgment. (Hebrew: understanding*).
he would take me to the starosta, the elder of the village. He would send me to the proper authority. On the way he told me that the country was in turmoil. The army and navy and the workers had taken over the government, and the Tsar was in exile. Hundreds of soldiers came from captivity every day and passed through the same village. The Austrian border was only a few miles away, and nobody was guarding it, neither the Austrians nor the Russians.

I registered at the starosta, and a motley bunch of us was packed into a train that was to take us to Kiev. At one of the stations where we stopped I asked a conductor where I could take a train to Kamenets-Podolsk, and he pointed to a waiting train on a nearby track. I jumped on the train, holding on to a railing at the door because there was no room inside. But as the train stopped at various stations some soldiers hopped out, and we who were crowded onto the steps of the coach went inside with much relief. My fingers were numb from holding onto the railing.

The disorder was so great that in all this journey nobody asked where we were going and why. We arrived at the Kamenets-Podolsk station toward evening. I spent my last pennies on some food and started out on foot to Orinin and home.

A footnote to my adventures or misadventures after my escape from the prison camp: The other two soldiers, one from Kiev and the other from Kharkov, whom I hastily accused of deserting me, were caught by the guard and kept in camp for two more months. They never tried to escape again.

One day when I was in Kamenets-Podolsk I saw my two friends walking in the downtown area. I recognized them immediately, but they hesitated for a while when I approached them, because I looked so different in my civilian clothing. We exchanged experiences, and I directed them to the Kehillah, the Federation of Jewish Charities. They were sent on their way to their homes.

**Revolution and Pogrom**

Russia was elated. The Ukraine was jubilant. Kamenets-Podolsk and the surrounding towns and villages were exhilarated. There was dancing in the streets. Soldiers and civilians kissed one another and sang the “Internationale”. A holiday spirit pervaded the streets and the squares of the cities and towns. Red flags hung from every

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*Pogrom, an organized massacre of Jews. (Russian)*
rooftop. Red flags draped every vehicle. A huge red flag waved on the tower of the city clock in Kamenets-Podolsk.

For Jews the Revolution was a second deliverance, equal to deliverance from Egypt. Only this time it was not God who wrought the deliverance, or Moses the intermediary. It was “We the people,” “We the workers,” “We the army, and the farmer, and all who were oppressed”.

It was springtime in Orinin. Nature had awakened, and so were the Jews of the town. Young people returned from the army. Suddenly they were transformed into orators. They spoke in the market place to the peasants: A new day had come for Russia. A new sun and new heavens. All over the land people were rising up. They were taking what was coming to them by virtue of their labors. Those who didn’t work, didn’t eat. Down with the Pan who owned the fields, and the forests, and the waters, and the very air you breathed. Arise and divide the land, free the forest, take what belonged to the Pan: cattle, sheep, implements, and his very furniture.

Organizers came from Kiev, from Odessa, and from nearby Kamenets-Podolsk. They all spoke the same language. They had the same slogans plastered on walls and on trees. The organizers wore uniforms of soldiers of the Red Army. The Red Star fluttered from every house, from every public place.

The rich were not forgotten. They must work. Those who are not willing to work have no place in the new social order.

During that honeymoon of the Revolution all traces of the Tzar’s orders were rescinded. Equality for all. Justice for all. All national partitions that divided Jews, and farmers, and workers were erased. It was not uncommon to find Jewish young men at the dances arranged by the villagers and Ukrainian girls fraternizing with Jewish boys.

A commissar was appointed over Orinin and the environs. A workers’ and farmers’ governing committee issued new laws and new regulations.

The older folks of Orinin looked with jaundiced eye at what was happening. The Jewish boys were too prominent on these committees. They were the ones who led a crowd to the estate of the Pan and left nothing standing but empty rooms and barns. They were the ones who arrested the people who managed the estate in the absence of the Pan. They also arrested the kulaks, the rich landowners and the Jews who were suspected of hiding grain and produce from the open market and asking exorbitant prices from the poor.
The order of things was reversed. The poorer a man was the higher he stood in the eyes of the commissar. The man who lived by the sweat of his brow was the man of the hour. The businessmen, the storekeepers, the men who had no definite profession had no standing in the community.

The time of the young had come. Fathers and mothers, and in fact anyone who was over forty, were reduced to silence. This new order would come into being by the will of the young. Anything that was created, believed in, and treasured by the people before the Revolution was old and had to be destroyed!

Needless to say, the churches and synagogues were nests of counter-revolution. No self-respecting son of the revolution would step inside them. New places of assembly grew up. New holidays were instituted. New values were introduced. Sons and daughters were estranged from their parents and, if they were not actually denouncing them, were indifferent to their plight.

In Orinin there was continual dancing and singing, and perpetual lectures on the new canons of the Revolution. There were exuberance and abandon in some quarters of the village and sadness and foreboding in others.

From Kiev came news of an uprising by the Ukrainians against the Red Army. The leader of that uprising was Hetman Petlura. Around Petlura gathered all the Ukrainian nationalists who wanted a separate Ukraine, governed by its own Rada, or Assembly, and independent of the Russian Republic. Petlura himself was a socialist, so his Jewish followers said. But the people around him were the riff-raff of the Revolution. Petlura installed himself in Kiev, called for a Peoples' Congress, divided up the work of government among ministers, and even had a Minister of Jewish Affairs. The army, however, had all the power. They called themselves Haidamaks and committed unbelievably bloodthirsty, barbaric atrocities. The historian of that period, Ismar Elbogen, writes:

Each of the parties (in the Ukraine) attacked Jews; the one side, because they were allegedly Bolsheviks; the other, because they were anti-Bolsheviks; all sides because they were unarmed and easy plunder. It was as if Hell had spewed forth all its fire and from all sides the flames were hurled upon the Jews.

Finally the Bolshevik armies defeated the Haidamaks, and Petlura and his bands were chased out of the Ukraine. But in the small towns, on the border of Austria, local peasants led by remnants of the
Haidamaks* still roamed the towns and villages and pillaged and burned as if nothing had happened.

Orinin was one of those towns.

**Night March to Orinin**

Kamenets-Podolsk was in the hands of the Bolsheviks, but the small towns which were scattered about for some ten or fifteen miles around the capital city were left to the mercy of bands of Haidamaks. Every day the population of Kamenets was swelled by people who had escaped from these towns. They told stories that were all too familiar: robbing, rape, killing, and burning of Jews and their property. The Bolshevik army that was stationed in Kamenets could not undertake a campaign against these marauders. They were not organized into one army; they were elusive, attacking a town here, a village there. They consisted mainly of local peasants coveting Jewish property.

The Red Army had good advice for the towns. Defend yourselves. They are after your lives, and you can rise up and pay them measure for measure. A life for a life. But that was easy to say. Jews had no weapons. The roving bands of Haidamaks were armed.

One morning word reached Kamenets-Podolsk that Orinin had been pillaged and a demand made on the townspeople to supply a certain amount of money for the Petlura forces or they would pay with their lives.

A group of us from Orinin who were living in Kamenets-Podolsk at the time gathered at the headquarters of the Bolshevik government and demanded arms and ammunition to go out to Orinin and save the lives of the people. A certain Captain Ivanov volunteered to go with us. He assembled us, about twenty young men from Orinin and other towns, all army men in the past, at the former Governor of Podolia House and instructed us in the use of arms. The instruction gave us confidence to go out and take vengeance on the Haidamaks for their deeds of the past and for what they demanded now.

We set out from Kamenets in the dark and reached the forest at daybreak. Beyond the forest were the Haidamaks. Ivanov told us to disperse and to enter the town from all sides. We were instructed not to shoot unless attacked, not to engage anyone in conversation except to answer greetings if anyone greeted us.

*Named after an Eighteenth Century armed band of serfs who revolted against the feudal Polish landowners, and also tortured and slaughtered Jews.
The town was asleep when we arrived. We alerted the Jews to pack up and to leave the town. We could not stay in Orinin, we explained, but we came to save them from the hands of the Haidamaks. The Haidamaks, when they learned of a “great Red Army” coming to Orinin, rushed out of their beds and fled as fast as their horses could carry them.

A caravan of horses and wagons traveled from Orinin to Kamenets-Podolsk, and we, the frightened ex-soldiers, brought up the rear in case of an attack. The Haidamaks returned to Orinin in the afternoon as we were entering Kamenets-Podolsk and found the town empty. It was not long afterward that the Red Army did come to the villages and routed the bandits.

Who was Comrade Ivanov? He disappeared after the march on Orinin. He didn’t wait to be thanked for leading us into battle. But I will remember him to the last day of my life. He was a stocky middle-aged man with a ruddy face and mild piercing eyes. He did not carry a rifle, but continually kept his hand on his revolver, and God help the man who stood in his path. Comrade Ivanov, our inspiration, our pillar of strength for one night. May your memory be blessed!

And Petlura? A captive of roving bands of Haidamaks who had committed inhuman atrocities in his name, he was assassinated by one of his victims. He was shot in Paris on May 26, 1926 by Shalom Schwartzbard, a watchmaker from the Ukraine, who had witnessed the murder of his parents in a pogrom.

He avenged for all the thousands of men and women, old and young, who had perished in the Ukraine at the hands of Haidamaks.
HARRY WOLFSON AS MENTOR

by Rabbi William G. Braude

On his way back from New Orleans where in the spring of 1929 he acquired the Ephraim Deinard Collection of Hebraica for Harvard, Harry Wolfson stopped for a day or so at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. During his brief visit he asked the President, Doctor Julian Morgenstern, for permission to meet a number of students. In later years, Professor Wolfson used to say that, of those he met at that time, he remembered three: Joshua Loth Liebman, who was to become one of America’s foremost preachers, whose Peace of Mind was a sensational best-seller, and whose career came to an untimely end by his sudden death; Jacob K. Shankman, who was to become the beloved Rabbi of Temple Israel, New Rochelle, and President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism; and the writer of these lines.1

After coming to Providence in 1932 and registering at the Graduate School of Brown University, I decided to prepare a dissertation on the attitude of Jews during the first five centuries of the Common Era toward proselyting, a subject which required use of Talmudic sources. No one at Brown was knowledgeable in the area, and so Professor Millar Burrows, head of the Department of Biblical Literature and the History of Religions, asked Professor Wolfson to monitor my thesis, which he did and presumably approved, since in 1937 Brown awarded me a doctorate in philosophy. Subsequently I received from time to time indirect messages from Professor Wolfson asking that I visit him. I did not — in part because in those years I was not fascinated by Jewish scholarship, and, besides, I was not too pleased with my dissertation, feeling as I did that it was a superficial piece of work.

In the fall of 1937 while serving as lecturer at Brown University I had Knute Ansgar Nelson as one of my pupils in a Hebrew course. Nelson, a native of Copenhagen, Denmark, came to the United States as a young man and converted to Catholicism. At the time we met, he, as a member of the English Society of Benedictines, served on the faculty of the Portsmouth Priory in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Nelson was gifted, diligent, and devout. (Later he was to become Bishop of Sweden, and but for the onset of illness might have received a Cardinal’s cap). Within one year he learned so much Hebrew that

1The three, as it happens, were close friends who, with the bravura of youth dubbed themselves “the Triumvirate.”
he was able to go through and memorize the Pirke Abot; and the following year we began reading the Psalms in Hebrew, using the commentaries of Rashi and Augustine. In the course of our intense study, I became aware that ninety per cent of Rashi’s commentary on Psalms is drawn from the Midrash on Psalms—a detail I mention here because it played a role in my subsequent relations with Professor Wolfson and consequent effect on the course of my rabbinate and indeed of my life.

It was while teaching at Brown that I came to realize the tenuous catch-as-catch-can status of Jewish studies at American universities, and so around 1939 or 1940 I decided that chairs for Jewish studies should be established in American universities throughout the land. At the time the only two such chairs were the Nathan Littauer at Harvard held by Harry Wolfson, and the Linda Miller at Columbia held by Salo Baron.

Wolfson, I felt, was the man to talk to, and so I went to see him. He did not spend much time on chairs for Jewish studies, except to say that the idea was good. He was, to my surprise, rather complimentary about the dissertation on Proselytes, rejecting my belittlement of it, and then went on to say that he had been wanting to talk to me about an important matter. A great university— he did not mention the name—was about to sponsor a series of translations of classic Jewish texts. Would I consider doing one? I suggested immediately the Midrash on Psalms. He approved, and within a short time I went to work on the text which proved so difficult that most of it I felt yielded no sense. It was Professor Wolfson who patiently showed me how obscure passages did make sense—brilliant sense, and could be set forth in felicitous English.

In those days my understanding of Midrash was meagre. On one occasion I came to Professor Wolfson with what I thought was a “discovery.” I found, so I said, in the midrash on Psalms an allusion to Paul obliquely referred to as “the heretic of Syria.” When Professor Wolfson heard of my “discovery,” he all but hit the roof. “That’s the trouble with you Rabbis,” he shouted, “you do not know how to read texts. No wonder we had our doubts about inviting Rabbis to do this kind of work. Your performance shows that

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2*Sayings of the Fathers*—a Mishnaic tractate concerned with moral conduct.

3The phrase *kamen bene suryata* (Midrash on Psalms 9:5 [Yale Judaica Series 13, i, 125]) which describes the Inclination to evil as “lurking among the bushes”—that is lying in ambush for the unwary—I read *kemin bene Suryata*, “like the heretic [namely, Paul] among the inhabitants of Syria”—a reading which betrayed all but total failure to understand the structure of Midrashic discourse.
doubters were right.” He then dragged me down into the lower recesses of Widener Library to demonstrate how wrong I was. By this time I was so bemused and frightened that I could not follow what he was trying to say to me, except to sputter weakly that I did not quite mean what I said. Thereupon he blew up again. “I spent a lifetime trying to figure out what people mean when they say something, and you are now telling me that you did not mean what you said.”

Presently the dust settled, and I learned my lesson which I suppose was what he intended to teach.

Sunday afternoons Professor Wolfson set aside for me at his apartment, 20 Prescott Street in Cambridge, where I called on him with my problems in deciphering unintelligible passages in the Midrash on Psalms. In my eyes he was a magician. Using few “tools” — books of reference — he deftly made his way through obscure words and lines, and rendered them in lucid English, often reproducing in English the ambiguities of the original Hebrew and Aramaic.

In those years I did not realize that the time Professor Wolfson was giving me was the equivalent of a bank like Chase Manhattan extending unlimited credit to a man just starting in business. I was so green I comprehended but vaguely the intensity of a true scholar’s quest. There was for example, the word pahat, which Jastrow’s Talmudic Dictionary translates, “cavity, pit”; “broken vessel, fragment”; or, “diminution, depreciation.” But none of the aforementioned meanings fit in a fable told in Psalm 7:11 (Yale Judaica, 13, 1, 110-11). And so Professor Wolfson reported that during a visit to New York he had discussed the meaning and etymology of pahat with the late Louis Ginzberg,4 and the two finally decided that in the context pahat meant “ vexation.” Though duly respectful, even feigning polite interest, inwardly I wondered what the fuss was about. Only years later I came to understand something of the passion for truth, for accuracy which set men like Harry Wolfson on fire.

Wolfson’s temperament was on the somber side. So during the years of World War II, he anticipated the worst — the Nazis’ victory and the destruction of Jewry. One day, as he was talking thus, pacing round and round in his room, I said: “But Dr. Wolfson don’t you believe in Hashgahah (God’s providence)?” “Oh,” he responded, “if you bring in Hashgahah, then you are talking of something completely

4Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
different.” And the sense of doom on his countenance was dispelled at once.

At the Harvard Faculty Club, where Professor Wolfson took most of his meals, he had a special table, identified as his very own. It was there that for the first time I heard the word cybernetics, a word coined and a discipline developed by the late Norbert Wiener, professor of mathematics at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The diner who reported the new word and discipline was glowing in his expectations of its incalculable possibilities, all but saying that the new machines which were about to be manufactured would be capable of surpassing and displacing the human mind. Wolfson perked up, differing with the grandiose statements just made, and in support quoted Aristotle on the limitations of a machine, even of the most sophisticated kind.

The other day I happened to tell the incident to two M.I.T. graduate students. Their response was glowing, taken as they were by Wolfson’s acute analysis of the limitations of the science of cybernetics, limitations which after the event these two students were fully aware of.

From time to time Professor Wolfson shared with me his “triumphs,” one of which involved Professor Samuel Eliot Morison. In the early 1930s Harvard University commissioned Morison to write its history for the forthcoming tercentenary, which was to be observed in 1936. In the course of preparing this history, while examining Harvard’s archives, Professor Morison came upon an essay on the porosity of matter. The essay, prepared in the latter part of the 17th century, presented to Doctor Morison a particularly baffling problem. Was the discussion on the porosity of matter a contribution to the science of the day? And if so, was Harvard already at that time an important center for scientific research? To these questions Morison sought answers but obtained none, until some one suggested that he go to the basement of Widener Library and there consult Wolfson, a professor at Harvard he had not heard of before. Wolfson, he was told, might provide the answers. Morison went, and Wolfson’s response was almost instant. Porosity of matter had been an important issue fifty years or so earlier, sometime during the first half of the 17th century. By the middle of that century, the issue was no longer alive. And more: the essay which Morison discovered — such was Wolfson’s surmise — looked as though it had been cribbed. In fact, Wolfson said, if Morison would look further in the archives, he might find
the original from which the essay had been copied. Morison went back to the archives where he did in fact find the original.

Morison thus obtained the answer he was after: at that time Harvard was not yet a center for scientific research, a find of great importance for him in the preparation of the history of Harvard's first 300 years. Presently, when Morison's daughter registered at Radcliffe, he told her that no matter what her academic interests were she should not fail to take at least one course with Harvard's greatest scholar — Harry Wolfson.

For my part I would turn to him for counsel. When the Hebrew Day School started in Providence, Pen [Mrs. Braude] and I were thinking of sending there our eldest son, Joel Isaac. But we were timid about doing it. How dare a Reform Rabbi send his children to an Orthodox day school? I consulted Professor Wolfson. "Send them, send them," was his instant response. "Ham they can learn to eat on their own, which is not likely to be the case with Hebrew." We followed his advice and sent our children to the day school, a practice which in subsequent years has come to be followed by many Reform Rabbis throughout the land, even as the very principle of Day Schools has come to be accepted by Conservative as well as Reform Jews.

During the years that Professor Wolfson guided me through the many "bafflements" of the Midrash on Psalms, he visited Temple Beth-El on a number of occasions. In 1954 he was present at the dedication of the structures on Orchard Avenue — indeed his name heads the list of Beth-El's distinguished visitors guest book. When he heard of the dance group which Pen started and directed at the Temple, he was delighted and began calling my wife "the dancing rebbetzin." Thereupon I suggested that the emergence of modern Jewish life may be summarized in the words "From Ivri teitch to dancing tights."

He came to the Congregation's observance on 15 November 1957 of the 25th anniversary of my rabbinate at Beth-El. He also attended the celebration of the 25th anniversary of our wedding in 1963 at which the Congregation presented to the Temple a Scroll with Pen's and my names inscribed on the Scroll's wooden disk. This occurred during the presidency of Doctor Samuel Pritzker. Rabbi Jerome Gurland, then Associate Rabbi at Beth-El, prepared a festive Sabbath meal at which Wolfson, Pen, and I were the guests of honor.

*Ivri teitch* means the "deutching" or rendering Hebrew Scriptures or prayers into Yiddish for the benefit of women many of whom could not follow the original.
Rabbi Braude’s 25th Anniversary Service on November 15, 1957. Left to right: Prof. Harry Wolfson, Rabbi Maurice V. Eisendrath, President UAHE, Rabbi Jacob K. Shankeman, Rabbi Braude, Joy Pitterman.
At the time my service at Beth-El was approaching twenty-five years, Professor Wolfson invited the late Irving Jay Fain to come to see him. During the visit Wolfson suggested that I be given life tenure, a suggestion which Irving Fain saw to it the Board and Congregation acted on favorably.

To return to the subject of chairs for Jewish studies, a pursuit which led to my first visit with Harry Wolfson: Upon my brother Michael's return from the navy I encouraged him to see what he could do to set up such a chair at the University of Chicago. He enlisted the help of several people of means, among whom Maxwell Abbell was the key person. A date for lunch was set during which the money for the chair was to have been provided. Regrettably, a few days before the gathering of these men was to take place, Abbell died, and so the project was carried no further.

At Brown I kept doing what I could, trying to enlist the help of people of means to establish such a chair. In the meantime we raised money — the Leo Grossman family were among the contributors — for visiting scholars: Gershom Scholem, Raphael Loewe, Zvi Werblowsky, Salo Baron, and the late Leon Roth.

During these years I kept working on the Midrash on Psalms. When its two volumes published by the Yale University Press appeared in 1959, Henni Wenkart Epstein told me that one day Professor Wolfson called her into his study and showed her these two volumes with the kind of pride and joy that is an author's. Indeed, though ever generous in his praise of me, Wolfson in a manner of speaking, did "author" the two volumes — was responsible for their making.

In 1973 and 1974 our eldest son, Joel Isaac, came to be very close to Professor Wolfson, whose sight and strength were failing. Twice every day, morning and evening, rain or shine, Joel would walk or drive Professor Wolfson to his study at Widener, even as he attended to and anticipated Wolfson's every need. In a letter dated 11 June 1975 Lewis Weinstein, lifelong friend of Professor Wolfson, wrote that Harry Wolfson had been "lavish in his expression of gratitude to Joel", and Weinstein himself noted "the tenderness, sensitivity, and solicitude of amazing quality in Joel's attachment."

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6A confirmand of Beth-El who now lives in Cambridge with her husband and three children, and besides, wrote books for children and got her doctorate from Harvard.

7When Joel was about seven I took him to Professor Wolfson's study where Joel asked: "What do you do all day?" Wolfson snapped: "I ride a bicycle." "But," asked Joel, "do not signs in the yard say, 'No bicycles allowed?" The Professor had no reply.
No wonder that Professor Wolfson was greatly moved by the news of Rita's (Joel's wife's) pregnancy. He predicted that she would give birth to a boy and as much as said that through this boy his name would be carried on.

As Professor Wolfson's life was drawing to a close, the last letter he wrote (dated 16 September 1974), he dictated to our son Joel. The subject dealt in part with Plato's definition of eternity as being both ungenerated and indestructible.

On the following day Professor Wolfson signed “A Living Will,” which his friend George Williams, Professor of Church History at Harvard, prepared. The text follows:

To my relations, friends, colleagues, and my lawyer,
To my several friendly and caring physicians, who have ministered to me faithfully,
To all also who may in the future have responsibility for me in my frailty,
I NOW, of sound mind, still thinking through aspects of my academic tasks, preparing for the second volume of my collected works, and awaiting the publication of the Kalam,
HOLDING that death is a part of life and wishing to maintain its dignity to the end,
DO HEREBY, with witnesses testifying thereto,
DECLARE it to be my desire
THAT the vitalities of my mind and body be allowed to run their natural course
WITHOUT the interposition of any extraordinary means that would interrupt the ebb.
AND IF toward the end, when there is absolutely no possibility of medically reversing the natural processes set in motion by aging or disease,
AND if the pain should ever become manifestly unbearable,
I SOLEMNLY REQUEST THAT those in attendance consider it my well deliberated wish
THAT they administer such medicine as will best relieve me in that time of suffering,
EVEN if that same medicine might also have the indirect consequence of shortening the process of my departure from you.
ALL OF YOU who have loved and admired me and thought well of my life's work,
ALL OF YOU who, as doctors or nurses, dedicated your lives to the healing skills
WILL, I trust, be the most resolute in carrying out my final wishes,
TO the formulation of which I hereby affix my signature:

Harry A. Wolfson

Witness:

George H. Williams
Joel Isaac Braude

Three days later on 20 September 1974, Harry Wolfson died.

Professor Wolfson's feeling that Rita would give birth to a boy proved right. Our grandson was born on 27 September 1974, the day following Yom Kippur. He was named Yosef after his paternal great grandfather Joseph Manasseh Finkelstein, and Zvi after Harry Wolfson.

Our grandson carries on the name of Harry Wolfson, even as Wolfson's numerous works are stamped with the scope and originality of his intellect. In the fall of 1975 Harvard announced a program with a goal of fifteen million dollars to establish a Center for Jewish Studies. In the announcement, Harvard speaks of the Center as a memorial and "fitting recognition of Harry Wolfson's unequalled scholarly achievements."
SAMUEL BELKIN AT BROWN — A POSTSCRIPT

by Rabbi William G. Braude

In Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, November, 1974 p. 611 I wrote that “a Mr. Botchkass... went to New York, to Yeshiva College, where he called upon Doctor Bernard Revel, then president, to provide ... a young man, a yeshiva bochur* whose patron would be Mr. Botchkass.”

The statement just cited requires correction and amplification. To begin with “Botchkass” spelled his name “Botchkad,” and his first name was Harry.

For a while, Botchkad did become Samuel Belkin’s patron, but, as I shall set forth, it happened in a somewhat different way.

Samuel Belkin left his native Shishlovitz, Poland in 1928, just before his 18th birthday and his being drafted into the Polish army. He embarked from the Baltic port of Gdynia for a month’s voyage fourth class, and arrived in New York 2 January 1929, where HIAS** served him a bowl of rice and milk soup, and tagged him for delivery to Windsor, Ontario in Canada.

From Windsor he continued to nearby Ford City to join his sister, Rose Mechanic, and her family. After three months with them Belkin decided that his future lay elsewhere. Rabbi Nahum Shulman of Windsor was instrumental at that time in securing for Belkin a student visa to the United States. In this effort Rabbi Shulman was aided by Samuel Belkin’s family in New York, who urged Doctor Bernard Revel, President of Yeshiva College in New York, to issue post-haste the papers which the American immigration officials required.

Upon his arrival at Yeshiva, Belkin renewed his acquaintance with Rabbi Shimon Shkop, one of the all-time great Talmudic scholars, who was then senior professor of Talmud at Yeshiva. It was Rabbi Shkop who had ordained Belkin as a rabbi.

That year Rabbi Shkop had decided to return to Grodno, Poland, where he regularly headed a Talmudic law academy. When Belkin saw the Rabbi off to Europe, the Rabbi’s parting words were: “Shishlovitzer,† you must remain in the U. S., where you have much to ac-

*A student at a college for Talmudic study.
**Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.
†In the yeshiva world, each student was identified by the town he came from. In Belkin’s case, Shishlovitz. Hence Belkin was known as “The Shishlovitzer.”
complish. You, I am certain, will help build a new Torah generation in America."

Before Rabbi Shkop's departure and prior to the arrival of his successor, Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, Rabbi Shkop, queried by the late Doctor Revel about an interim lecturer for shiurim (lectures) to the senior class, replied: "The Shishlovitzer."

Belkin accepted the post for a brief period. However, at that time, Rabbi Yehudah Heshel Levenberg, chief Rabbi of New Haven and founder of a yeshiva for senior students, decided to move his school to Cleveland and take Belkin with him. Belkin remained in Cleveland for five months. Subsequently, Rabbi Levenberg's yeshiva moved to Baltimore and is now known as Yeshiva Neir Israel.

In Cleveland Belkin decided to pursue his general academic studies. Thereupon Levenberg arranged for him to meet the late Charles Torrey, professor of Biblical and Oriental Studies at Yale University. Torrey was willing to accept Belkin at Yale's Graduate School, but then advised him to choose a smaller institution, such as Brown, and arranged to have Belkin meet Henry Thatcher Fowler of Brown's faculty. Fowler warmly received the young student-teacher, and so in the fall of 1931, just before Rosh Hashanah, Belkin came to settle in Providence.

As is the custom of newcomers to a city, Belkin set out to call on the local rabbis to discuss Talmudic law. Since he was particularly impressed by Rabbi Asher Werner, he prayed on his first Sabbath in Providence at Rabbi Werner's Bnai Zion Synagogue. The rabbi invited Belkin to visit him that Saturday night, and it was then that Belkin met Mr. and Mrs. Harry Botchkad, a childless couple who resided on a large estate in Conimicut, Rhode Island. Botchkad told Rabbi Werner that it was difficult for the Jews in Conimicut to get a tenth man for their minyan and, besides, they required someone for the High Holidays to read the Torah and preach sermons.

So Rabbi Werner said: "I have here a youthful genius in Talmud. Perhaps I can persuade him to stay with you for the Holidays to preach and read the Torah." Belkin was persuaded. Subsequently the Botchkads proposed that Belkin live with them, and even provided a chauffeur to drive Belkin to Brown each day.

Belkin stayed with the Botchkads for approximately six months. Then, with the worsening of the Depression, the Botchkads lost everything, and Belkin was left without any financial support. Fortunately,
Belkin’s aunt and her daughter, Mrs. Ira Sobel, offered a stipend of $60 a month, to carry him through the next three-and-a-half years during which he was to study at Brown, Harvard, and Yale.

In 1931 tuition at Brown was $300 a year. When Belkin was asked for the first payment, he had only $5, and so the bursar referred him to Roland G. Richardson, dean of the Graduate School.

After listening to Belkin’s story, the dean said: “In your folder it says that before you came to the United States you were ordained a rabbi at the age of seventeen. Brown University has a special scholarship for ministers ordained in the Baptist denomination. I’ll make an exception and give you that scholarship.” And then with a smile: “Now, you’re a Baptist Rabbi!”

A few years later Belkin’s student visa was about to expire, and he would have been forced to leave the United States. Thereupon Dean Richardson had Belkin elected an honorary fellow of Brown, and thus made it possible for him to apply for American citizenship.

In 1934 Belkin decided to spend a year at Harvard under the guidance of the late Professor Harry A. Wolfson, who, vouching for Belkin, told the dean that some day Samuel Belkin would reflect credit on Harvard, a prediction that was to be fulfilled.

*During the summer of 1930 at a reception given to Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik and to the Lubavicher Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneersohn upon their arrival in New York, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, President of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, welcomed the two distinguished guests even as he announced the youthful Belkin’s appointment in Cleveland.*
THE YEARS OF THE JEWISH WOMAN

by ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

This is our heritage, we who are born female and Jewish — to "practice charity and benevolence".¹ Nineteen-seventy-five has been designated "The Year of the Woman". However, in the documentation of the charitable acts of Rhode Island Jewish women, who have always given of themselves to those in need, every year has been "the year of the woman".

MANY LADIES ORGANIZE

The Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association was "the first Jewish charitable association in Providence," having been organized in 1877 and chartered in 1880.² There is a description of the organization in a 1926 issue of the Providence Magazine, published by the Providence chamber of commerce:

The Montefiore Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Association, the first Jewish Charitable Society in Providence, was organized in October, 1877, its object being to relieve distress among the needy Jewish families of the city. The method adopted has always savored of the friendly visit, and the work is carried on entirely by volunteers, who respond in all weather to calls for assistance.

Coal, clothing, food, eyeglasses and medical appliances have cheerfully and unostentatiously been given. The need for these has naturally grown during the past few years, owing to the greatly increased Jewish population and the industrial depressions, so that now from $100 to $150 a month is usually dispensed.

It is worthy of note that the sum of $60 a year is the total expense of the association in conducting all the work of the charity committee.

Mrs. Moses Einstein, who has been chairman for many years, is well known throughout the circle of organized charities, and her valuable experience, her untiring effort and sympathetic handling of the perplexing problems incident to her work are a valuable asset to this useful organization.

The present officers are: President, Mrs. David Bernkopf; Vice President, Mrs. Harry Cutler; Treasurer, Mrs. S. K. Grover; Financial Secretary, Mrs. Edwin Slocum; and Recording Secretary, Mrs. Joseph A. Wolf.

At that time it cared for 40 beneficiaries per month. Its purposes, of "visiting and granting weekly benefits to sick members and to assist the poor and needy" were admirable. But its apparent snob appeal cannot be ignored. Active membership was confined to women of
"irreproachable character and in good mental and physical health". As David C. Adelman stated in his account of the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association, "Membership was a symbol of social prestige and applicants were rigidly screened by an investigating committee."

Even prior to incorporation in 1880 of the first chartered women's charitable organization, the role women played as they performed their daily "mitzvahs"* has always been part of each family's lore. The Jewish immigrant to the United States could always count on bed and board until a job was found and the money accumulated to bring his own family to this country. When a family was visited by illness, bad fortune, or death, the women were there when needed.

In quick succession after the chartering of the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association many other groups of women banded together to bestow charity and for various other purposes. Among these were the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association in 1890; the Young Ladies Hebrew Aid Society of Providence, Rhode Island in 1894; the Ladies Friendship Lodge in 1897; The Young Women's Hebrew Association in 1900; Miriam Society, Number One in 1903; The Providence Ladies Charitable Society in 1904; The Miriam Hospital Association of Providence, Rhode Island in 1907; South Providence Ladies Aid Association in 1908; and the list goes on.\(^1\)

It is interesting to speculate about how the founding mothers of the organizations of the late 19th century and early years of this century would view the Jewish Home for the Aged and The Miriam Hospital of today, for which they were partially or totally responsible. One must wonder how these dedicated ladies, our ancestors, would look on the "big business" tactics of today's organized charity. Even the all-volunteer organizations of today solicit by streamlined methods, using the telephone and attractive mailings. The woman volunteer of that generation climbed the stairs of many an old tenement house collecting a dime (or more if it could be spared) in an outstretched handkerchief. She walked for hours selling 50¢ party tickets to raise money. She thought in terms of pennies rather than dollars when soliciting donations. Instead of the luncheon caterers of today, volunteer cooks spent many hours in home kitchens preparing for parties.

The good deeds and efforts of all of these organizations are countless. The history of just one of them, the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, will serve as an example.

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*Mitzvah, literally "commandment", it has come to mean a meritorious act, or a "good work". (Hebrew)
THE LADIES HEBREW UNION AID ASSOCIATION

Fortunately several documents are available which convey the feelings of past presidents about the history of this organization. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association at a luncheon held on January 5, 1937 in the Narragansett Hotel ballroom in Providence, Mrs. Ephraim Rosen spoke as follows:

This organization is a ladies' organization. Its members are women: women are mothers, and the whole world knows what the word MOTHER means. Throughout the 50 years this organization has primarily been a motherly one. It has rendered motherly care; motherly assistance; and been a symbol of maternal benevolence to the needy, the poor and the distressed.

We mothers can't conduct an organization of our kind in a strictly business manner. We mothers do not consider our accomplishments in the light of Profit or Loss. We cannot render charity and assistance by set rules and regulations. We are just mothers. The first thought of a mother is to help her child; to do all she can to relieve distress and pain to the child, and that is just what we have done for 50 years and will continue to do as long as God will spare us.

Now let us review some of the pleasant memories of the past. When this organization was 25 years old, we reached the stage of life in which we had a woman's natural desire, the desire to create — to give birth to a child. And so the Jewish Home for the Aged was conceived and born. In giving life, our lives were renewed. Only a mother understands the hopes and fears that were ours. Would it be blessed with a fair start in life? Would it thrive mentally and physically? Would we be able to sustain and nourish it into manhood? Or, would it slip beyond our control? We mothers looked at it through eyes of love; thought it beautiful. But others viewed it skeptically and feared its future.

Yes, it was rough sailing. There were times when we were fraught with doubt and anxiety. Many obstacles were in our way, but mothers never complain, never give up. Mothers do not neglect their children or let them die just because they require constant care and love.

In that child, so worthy of our devotion, we instilled courage, wisdom and the desire to always be of service to others. We watched with pride and exultation its progress, and our hearts voiced a prayer that we would be able to guide it into manhood. Now we can sit in the background and see our dreams perpetuated, our prayer granted.

The Jewish Home for the Aged has outgrown us and stands firmly and courageously with any other institution of its kind. We feel the greatest joy and satisfaction that the care of this institution was entrusted to us in the early years to mold and
The Years of the Jewish Woman

direct, and it has borne fruit. It now takes its place with esteem among men, a credit to this community.

The men, who 25 years ago scorned our endeavor, now look with pride and possession at our child, claiming it for their own. We are not grieved, because we know that a child must be shared with the world, but in our hearts we claim him forever ours, our very own creation.

In the program for the affair a short history of the organization contained the following information: "Fifty years ago, in January 1887, ten individuals banded together to form the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, whose purpose it was to assist all needy Jewish families, supplying them with Food, Coal, Passover Supplies, Rent, Medicine, and to make loans whenever necessary."

The charter members of the organization were listed as: Mr. Moses Finkelstein, Mr. Herman Max, Mr. Meyer Bromson, Mrs. Augusta Cohen, Mrs. Bessie Finkelstein, Mrs. Eva Rosenfield, Mrs. Rosa Weis- man, Mrs. Bessie Davis, Mrs. Fannie Davis, and Mrs. Lea Jersky.

The following were listed as having served as president up to 1937: Mrs. M. Feldman, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. Clara Feinstein Lepis, Fall River, Mass.; Mrs. B. Yarous, Providence, R. I.; Mrs. Louis Feiner, Providence, R. I.; Mrs. Isaac Woolf, Providence, R. I.; and Mrs. Ephraim Rosen.

To update the list, the following have also held the office of president: Mrs. Charles Adelberg, Mrs. Albert Cohen, and Mrs. Samuel Sheffres.

Funds for the organization, according to the history, were raised through membership dues, an annual coal fund drive, and the annual Moes Chitim* drive, as well as from other voluntary contributions. The history enumerated the various services performed by its members. They periodically visited patients at the State Institutions at Howard, Rhode Island and Charles V. Chapin Hospital in Providence, where they distributed "goodies" and cigarettes to all Jewish patients. On Hanukkah and Purim** each patient received a gift of stockings

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* Also transliterated as Moes Hittim and Maot Hittim, literally "Money for wheat." Money given to the poor at Passover for the purchase of matzoh, unleavened bread. (Hebrew)

** Hanukka, The Feast of Lights.

Purim, The Feast of Lots, commemorating the rescue of the Jews of Persia from the villainous Haman.

Shemot, The Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost.

Sukkoth, The Festival of Tabernacles.

Rosh Hashanah, The New Year.

Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement.
and handkerchiefs. On Passover matzoh and fruit were sent to the Jewish inmates at Howard and at Wallum Lake, the tuberculosis sanatorium. Shevuoth, Succoth, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur* were also celebrated in the traditional manner.

The role that the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association played in organizing the Jewish Home for the Aged in April 1912, with Mrs. Isaac Woolf serving as first president of that organization, is also cited. Incorporated in the history were also the names of other worthwhile organizations to which this group contributed, such as the Deborah Sanatorium in Los Angeles, the Denver Sanatorium, the Hospital for Insane in Palestine, the Providence Community Chest, the Institute for the Blind, and the United Palestine Appeal.

Ten years later, in 1947, Mrs. Samuel Sheffres delivered an address on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Association. Among her reminiscences about the work of the women were the following:

As we go back to the very humble beginning of the Ladies Union Aid Association we can only marvel at the accomplishments of the handful of women — who despite the fact that they had little time — yes, and little worldly goods, managed to find time to help others. In those days, most women raised large families, did their own sewing and baking — and then in a spirit of thankfulness for their own bounty, turned to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. There are no written records of the work done in the early years of the organization, but the people who were helped are living testimonials of its accomplishments. The dues — ten cents every two weeks — was collected by the members. Their ready response to every appeal has drawn criticism from many sources. The Ladies Union Aid has been accused of helping undeserving people — of letting their hearts rule — instead of their heads. Perhaps if I tell you a story I heard recently, it may explain this policy to you. A long time ago a poor man appealed for help — no, not to the Ladies Union Aid — but to another agency. He was told his case would be investigated, and they would let him know what they could do for him. Several days went by, and he had no word from them. Alone, friendless and helpless, he went down to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad yard, laid down on the tracks and let the trains ride over him. When his case investigation was complete, the only help they could give him, was to pay his funeral expenses. . . . Believing that no one will ask for aid unless it is urgent, every appeal is answered immediately — and then investigated — to see if further aid is needed. Maybe that is not the best business method, but it is the way of the Jewish Heart.

*See footnote previous page.
Mrs. Sheffres also cited the remarkable accomplishment of the women of her organization in 1911 in starting the Jewish Home for the Aged in a rented cottage at 161 Orms Street. As Mrs. Sheffres concluded, “It is very easy to stand here and give you a short resume of the work done through these many years. The story flows along very smoothly and evenly — but only the women who worked know what difficulties they met and how they labored to overcome them.”

Mrs. Sheffres was installed as president of the organization at an annual luncheon celebrating its 60th anniversary. She was to serve as its last president.

An undated newspaper clipping containing portions of the above address contained the information that “The group has had the same treasurer for thirty-eight years, Mrs. Ignatz Weiss”. Mrs. Weiss had joined the Association forty-four years previously when the membership stood at 150. In 1912, when the Jewish Home for the Aged was founded, there were 1200 members. “Today (1947) there are between four and five hundred. . . . The dues, which began at ten cents every two weeks, were increased to $5.00 a year. Half of this is now given to the Association treasury and the other half to the Jewish Home for the Aged.”

**T**HEY C**R**EATED THE J**E**WISH HOME FOR THE AGED

The importance of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association in the origins of Jewish Home for the Aged is well known. There are many examples of tribute paid to these women for this role. A letter from Jacob I. Felder, president of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, dated December 29, 1950, to Mrs. Samuel Sheffres, president of the Ladies Union Aid Association, stated:

On behalf of the officers of the Jewish Home for the Aged, the members of its Board of Trustees, and our residents, I wish to give public expression of our gratitude to the Ladies Union Aid Association on its sixty-fifth anniversary.

The Home is grateful to the Ladies Union Aid, not only for its very founding in 1912, but also for the leadership during the first twenty years of the Home’s existence. Our present Home is actually the successor to what your society has created and nurtured.

It is therefore fitting and proper that we should recognize your faithful labors for the creation and advancement of our Home through your association. If your organization had done nothing else than to founded the Jewish Home for the Aged in this community, it would deserve the lasting gratitude of this community.
Sixty-fifth anniversary of The Ladies' Hebrew Union Aid Association in December 1950. Left to right: Mrs. Sarah Weiss (Charter Member of the Jewish Home for the Aged), Mrs. E. A. (Rose) Silberman, Mrs. Sophie Chorney, unidentified, Mrs. Morris Snow, unidentified, Mrs. Samuel (Ida) Resnick, Mrs. Samuel (Rose) Sheffres, and Mrs. Dianah Silk (at the microphone).

On January 6, 1953 the Ladies' Hebrew Union Aid Association presented funds to the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island to establish a pavilion in its name. Left to right: Mrs. Samuel Sheffres, Max Winograd, and Jacob I. Felder.
for this accomplishment. If you add to this your many other endeavors in behalf of the underprivileged and needy of this community, your record is one of accomplishment of which you can be justly proud. May you and your organization continue to grow and perform its benevolent work on behalf of the needy of our community.

The establishment of a home for the aged provided, not only a much needed physical facility for the older members of the community, but more significant, a Jewish facility. In the Board of Trade Journal cited earlier, there is a reference under a section elaborately titled, "A Little Guide to Providence. An alphabetical presentation of the Institutions and Attractions; facts and figures of the Metropolitan District of Providence". Among the institutions described was the Home for Aged Men and Aged Couples located at 807 Broad Street, and founded in 1874. Eligible for residence were "respectable persons of American parentage who have reverses". Sectarian institutions seem to have been the custom.

The Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association retained title to the old Home on Orms Street until 1953. In that year they deeded the property to the Jewish Home for the Aged on Hillside Avenue. It was promptly sold, the proceeds going to the general funds of the Home. In return the Association would now hold all its meetings in the new pavilion of the Home. This pavilion was designated the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Pavilion. The text of that transaction follows:

AGREEMENT made this 6 day of January 1953 between the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Rhode Island, and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Rhode Island.

In consideration of the transfer of real estate by the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, to the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, expressly including that commonly described and referred to as 191 Orms Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

WHEREIN IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

That the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island shall receive and install on a permanent basis as a permanent memorial of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association and its members, the plaques and memorials presently in the building at 191 Orms Street, Providence, Rhode Island, in the present sun porch or other suitable room or space in the building of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island at 99 Hillside Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island, and that said sun porch or other suitable room in the building of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island
shall be available as a place to hold Board and Membership meetings of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association.

Signed: JACOB I. FELDER, PRESIDENT

JEWISH HOME FOR THE AGED:

Signing for the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association were:

Mrs. Samuel Sheffres  Mrs. Esther Resnick
Mrs. Samuel Resnik  Mrs. Benjamin Glantz
Mrs. Joseph Chorney  Mrs. Morris Snow
Mrs. Jack A. Cerel  Mrs. Ignatz Weiss
Mrs. Samuel Rosen  Mrs. Lena Young
Mrs. Charles Rouslin  Mrs. E. A. Silberman
Mrs. Samuel Kabalkin  Mrs. Rose Kahnefsky
Mrs. Jacob Bilsky  Mrs. Rose Gottleib
Mrs. Charles L. Adelberg  Mrs. Rebecca Lindman
Adaline Schoenberg  Mildred Gray
Boris B. Fish
Rose H. Lappin

In view of their charitable tradition, it is not surprising that the women who made up the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association comprised one of the three instigating organizations which created the Festival Committee for State Institutions of Rhode Island. Actually as early as 1910 there is documentation that various members of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association visited the State Institutions, or Howard, as they were then familiarly called. At a meeting held in the home of Mrs. Samuel Sheffres representatives of three organizations — the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association, and the South Providence Ladies Aid Association — it was decided to form the Festival Committee for State Institutions of Rhode Island. The need for representatives for the Jewish residents was poignantly recounted in an interview with Mrs. Sheffres. The Catholics had visits from members of a Catholic guild. The Protestants were represented by members of their various churches. It was a function of these religious groups to visit their members to determine their needs and to hold religious services. Their important holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, were celebrated at the institutions. Mrs. Sheffres's interpretation was that these inmates had "status" in the eyes of the guards because there was someone who cared about them. However, the Jew, who often had no living relative, or perhaps more unfortunate, no living relative who cared about him, was often the victim of a sadistic attendant. There was no one to listen to the abused patient. Mrs. Sheffres recalled her visit to the office of Doctor William O. Rice who was Medical Superintendent of the State Infirmary. She said to him, "Dr.
Rice, this is a terrible thing”, and described a woman patient who had been beaten up. Doctor Rice answered, “You have no temple they can go into. The guards, hired at random, often pick on the Jews.” But with the Festival Committee, she explained, we had an organization that assured regular visits to the residents by its members. “If anyone was abused, it was reported right away. Then it (the beatings) stopped”. “We erected a chapel, a Rabbi holds services weekly, and visits all the patients.”

Mrs. David Schwartz described a party held on October 15, 1953 at Harrington Hall at Howard in this way:

**A PARTY AT SUKKOS**

There was the beautiful Sukkah, on the stage of the Auditorium, put up for the Holiday of Sukkos,* so that our residents may know this was their holiday. As the Rabbi explained the Sukkah to this group, who stood silently and reverently listening, one would feel that here was a Mitzvah well done.

The Rabbi started with a Kiddush and then went on to relate the story behind the Sukkah, saying “that even tho we live in tents, God will protect you” and so God will hear your prayers, too, and some day you will be well again and go home to your families.

I’m sure with bringing some religion into their lives and knowing they are not forgotten by the outside world, they must find some hope and cheer within themselves.

I left the auditorium with a great feeling of mixed emotions and much gratitude to the Ladies of the Festival Committee for this great gesture of kindness and praying inwardly that they may be granted strength and courage to carry on in this worthy cause, bringing a bit of light into a world of darkness.

Mrs. Schwartz, who worked for many years both as an officer of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association and as a member of the Festival Committee, was satisfied that the ladies who volunteered were amply rewarded by the look of gratitude from these residents.

**A PURIM PARTY**

The minutes of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association as well as the minutes of the Festival Committee for State Institutions of Rhode Island for the year 1955 recorded by the secretary, Mrs. David Schwartz, were available for study. These dedicated women provided a great variety of services for the State Institutions. A Purim Party was held on Friday

*Also transliterated as Sukkoth (see footnote p. 155). The Sukkah is a booth, roofed with branches and decorated inside with flowers and fruit. Sukkoth is a holiday of Thanksgiving. Kiddush is the prayer and ceremony that sanctifies the Sabbath and Jewish holy days.
Succoth festival for patients at the State Institutions at Howard, R. I. Rabbi Morris Schussheim (right) officiated at the ceremony, assisted by Mrs. Samuel Sheffres (left). The boy (center) is not identified. (Providence Journal photo, October 10, 1952)

A picnic for patients in the Fall of 1961, at the Rhode Island State Institutions was prepared by Mrs. Barney (Ida) Buckler, Mrs. Moe (Dorothy) Cohen, a Mrs. Field and her sister, Mrs. Herbert Fellman, Mrs. Max Harriett, Mrs. Rose Karnofsky, Mrs. Samuel (Ida) Resnick, and Mrs. F. A. Silberman (in alphabetical order).
afternoon, March 11, 1955, for the residents at Howard. "Rabbi Morris Schussheim officiated at the services, and as always, we served all kinds of refreshments, including homantochen,* which signified the holiday of Purim. It was a beautiful party and appreciated by all." The affair was described in a letter of March 21 sent to the president of the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association, and also to all organizations interested in the Festival Committee to keep them informed and to thank them for their contributions to "this worthy humane cause." Similar letters were also sent to other organizations such as the women's division of the Cranston Jewish Community Center. These organizations were asked for contributions so that the Festival Committee might afford more parties. The contributions were needed to augment the money raised at the annual bridges. It was also noted in the minutes of the organization that many persons contributed goods and services such as cookies, apples, wine for a Seder,** or transportation for those who served on the Committee. These individuals and businesses were sympathetic to the idealistic women who made up the Festival Committee. Other letters of solicitation to the various organizations were termed "Requests for Moes Chitim Charity for Passover."

A report on the activities of the Festival Committee for State Institutions of Rhode Island also included a description of a Passover Seder:

Held on Monday evening, April 11, 1955, in the Adolph Myer Building, Howard. Rabbi Schussheim officiated at the Pesach Seder: Sixty residents taking part, one resident made the Kiddush, while three women residents lighted the holiday candles. A cooked meal, shopped and prepared for by the Committee, consisted of gefilte (stuffed) fish, soup, chicken, matzos dessert, wines.

For Exeter School, the Passover was held on Tuesday afternoon, at 1:30 P.M., April 12, 1955. One hundred children were taken care of. Servings of apples and cookies (were served) to the outside children.

There was also reference to a bridge party scheduled to be held in the fall. The purpose of the annual bridge was to raise funds needed to support the year's holiday parties given at the State Institutions. The women anticipated disposing of 1,000 raffle tickets and 500 bridge tickets. In the minutes of a November 2, 1955 board meeting of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, there was reference to

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* Also rendered hamantashen, a symbolic food of Purim, a three-cornered sweet pastry filled with prunes or poppy seeds.
** Combination of banquet and religious service which initiates the Passover holiday.
† Now the Ladd School for the mentally retarded. See Note 9.
This photograph appeared in *The Rhode Island Jewish Herald* of September 12, 1963 with the following caption: "PREPARE FOR ANNUAL BRIDGE—The Festival Committee for the State Institutions at Howard and Exeter met at the home of Mrs. Samuel Sheffres, to plan for their Annual Bridge which will be held on Tuesday (September 16) at 1 P.M. in the auditorium of the Jewish Home for the Aged. Shown in the above picture is the award presented to the Committee by Augustine Riccio, state director of Public Welfare, in honor of the 15 years of service by the women to the hospital. Members of the committee are, seated left to right, Mesdames Leo Greenberg, chairman, Samuel Sheffres, president, and Moe Cohen, state institutions. Standing left to right are Mesdames Herbert Fellman, Charles Lappin, Samuel Resnick, Leo Rappaporte and Barney Buckler."
this bridge, which was held on October 4, 1955. This was the third annual bridge party sponsored by the Festival Committee. They realized the sum of $1,127.50, which represented a tremendous amount of volunteer work on the part of devoted women. These bridges, an annual money raising event for many years, were phased out under the funding system to be described below.

In the first half of 1975 there was a Medical Center state employees' strike. Publicity about the strike prompted publication of an article about Mrs. Moe (Dorothy) Cohn\footnote{in The Cranston Herald.} Mrs. Cohn, the sister of Mrs. David Schwartz, has served at the State Institutions as a Red Cross Gray Lady since 1940. Because of her membership on the Festival Committee, and her role as a Gray Lady, she has served for many years as a sort of liaison person for the Festival Committee. Since she has had continuous contact with the patients, Mrs. Cohn has been able to determine their needs and report them to the Festival Committee. For example, one person might need new shoes, another a new robe or nightgown. On a visit to the Medical Center on June 27, 1975 with Mrs. Cohn and Mrs. Sheffres, their rapport with the residents was quite apparent to this writer. The residents would turn to these two women with their requests. Since the annual summer outing arranged by the Festival Committee was soon to be scheduled, the interest and excitement among those who were with us were very evident as they inquired about its date. Outings, holiday parties, Friday night suppers, little gifts of candy or items from the canteen break up what would otherwise be a monotonous existence. In these dedicated women the residents have someone to whom they can turn, who will listen to them and fulfill any requests within their abilities.

Mrs. Cohn, in addition to her chores as a Red Cross Gray Lady, established a memorial fund for her husband and with donations from relatives and friends bought furniture and appliances for the hospitals. She also has been successful in "getting businesses to donate their products to patients. . ."\footnote{She "first became interested in the Medical Center in 1939 when a friend who was a volunteer there invited her down for a day. 'It was like the snake pit,' recalled Mrs. Cohn."} An earlier newspaper account\footnote{carried a picture of Mrs. Cohn displaying gifts for the children at Exeter School. She was called an "emissary of the Ladies' Union Aid, Montefiore and the Providence Ladies' Auxiliary groups of women who have united in a 'festival committee' to help others."} carried a picture of Mrs. Cohn displaying gifts for the children at Exeter School. She was called an "emissary of the Ladies' Union Aid, Montefiore and the Providence Ladies' Auxiliary groups of women who have united in a 'festival committee' to help others."
DR. SIDNEY GOLDSTEIN AND THE JEWISH CHAPEL

The Jewish chapel earlier referred to — a most important facility for the residents — was dedicated on October 11, 1964. Almost eleven years later, on the day of my June visit, I attended a Friday noon service in the chapel with Rabbi Jacob Handler of Temple Beth Israel officiating. The small area allotted to the chapel in the Hazard Building is now to be replaced by a new chapel which will house three halls to accommodate the Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant worshipers.

An earlier issue of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* carried a description of the origins of the Jewish Chapel and its dedication as a memorial to Doctor Sidney Goldstein, who died on February 9, 1963. He had been Superintendent of the State Hospital for Mental Diseases from 1960 until his untimely death in 1963. Doctor Goldstein, beloved by patients and staff, was also the first president of the Rhode Island Chapter of the Academy of Religion and Mental Health. Among the committee members who were involved in the planning of this chapel was Mrs. Dorothy Cohn.

An account of the dedication appeared in the *Providence Journal* of October 10, 1964:

What began as small contributions from nurses and social workers who had been associated with Dr. Sidney S. Goldstein at the Rhode Island Medical Center has ended up as a newly-reconstructed Jewish chapel which will be dedicated tomorrow as a memorial to the doctor.

... Speakers will include Governor (John H.) Chafee, Rep. John E. Fogarty and Augustine W. Riccio, state director of social welfare.

A room that had been used for Jewish services has been re-decorated and refurnished. It now has a Holy Ark in which the Torah, or Law of Moses, will be placed after tomorrow's dedication. It also has an Eternal Light.

As described by Herman L. Goldberg, executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service and chairman for the dedication services, the chapel will be made available for use as a community cultural and recreational center as well as a religious center.

A folding door will close off a portion of the facility for use as a kitchen and for recreation.

The chapel also can be used as a meeting room for discussions of medical and professional services.
The Sons of Zion Congregation in Providence donated the Torah for the chapel, Mr. Goldberg said.

The Festival Committee of women which arranges for the observance of Jewish holidays by patients at the medical center donated the Eternal Light, he said. The committee of about 55 women represents three organizations, the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Society, the Montefiore Society and the South Providence Ladies Aid Association.

Mr. Goldberg credited the festival committee, which he said "is very active during the year with Jewish patients", as the stimulant behind the new chapel.

The chapel work cost about $4000, which has been raised by a memorial committee formed a year ago under the chairmanship of Harry A. Schwartz.

Now that a Torah and an Eternal Light are available, full Jewish services can be held daily and on holidays under the direction of Rabbi Charles M. Rubel, the chaplain.

Henry W. Markoff, Providence engineer, was the architect for the renovation. Ralph H. Fishbein, Pawtucket cabinet maker, did the transformation.

Other members of the memorial committee, in addition to Mr. Goldberg and Mr. Schwartz, are Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen, Rabbi Rubel, Mrs. Dorothy Cohn, Dr. Max Fershtman, Edward P. Henry and John L. Newman. Dr. Fershtman is secretary. Mr. Newman is treasurer.

As of this writing three rabbis share duties at the various State Institutions: Rabbi Jacob Handler at the Institute of Mental Health; Rabbi Saul Leeman at the Dr. Joseph H. Ladd School in Exeter, Rhode Island; and Rabbi Jerome S. Gurland at the Adult Correctional Institutions.

The services, which the residents consider a high spot of their week, have a unique informality. Presented in a simple teacher-pupil dialogue format, the services are more meaningful to those who can comprehend them than a more complex service would be. A Kiddush following each service, eagerly awaited by the residents, is provided each Friday through Festival Committee funds.

A large amount of work was involved in providing for the needs of the Jewish patients by the workers of the Festival Committee. Mrs. Sheffres spoke of how she would search among the items on sale at the Thrift Shop of the Council of Jewish Women to find a needed dress or man's jacket. Or how she would buy Hanukkah gifts from the Outlet Company department store, which would give the Festival
Committee a discount. Mrs. Sheffres also recalled the many people over the years who had given of their time and money. Jake Kaplan, automobile dealer, provided buses for the outings. Fred Spigel, dealer in kosher meat and delicatessen, generously provided at cost the food used on Friday nights and for the holidays. Spigel’s and the kitchen staff of the state institutions now prepare the kosher food originally prepared by the women in the kitchen of Sarah and Louis Fishbein.

**THE LADD SCHOOL AT EXETER**

In a telephone interview with Mrs. Albert Cohen, former president of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, information was obtained about her present role at the Dr. Joseph H. Ladd School. She has assumed the sole responsibility for the observance of the holidays at this school. At present only the two holidays of Passover and Hanukkah are celebrated with the residents. She has succeeded in maintaining this service even though her “committee” has consisted of only a few friends who have helped her with the physical work involved. There are fifty children (called children, not necessarily because of their age in terms of years, but from a mental standpoint) and in addition the attendants at the Ladd school. All are served a complete Passover Seder meal. At Hanukkah gifts and party food for both the residents and attendants are brought to the school. Based on over fifty years of experience in this type of volunteering activity, Mrs. Cohen was convinced that in no other way could one feel as much gratification as from the delight shown by the children for the attention they received. To supplement the dwindling group of Festival Committee women, Mrs. Cohen stated, an occasional parent or relative of a resident at one of the state institutions would visit and help out in serving the other Jewish patients.

The Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association is no longer in existence. The members decided to disband, since most of its functions are now provided by the professional services of the Jewish Family and Children’s Service. There is, however, still a Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Foundation, to which some loyal members still send in voluntary dues. The balance of the money, left after the $3,000 contribution to the Jewish Home for the Aged patio, was in the vicinity of $2500. The interest realized from the money in the foundation is used for the special needs of the residents of the Home. The funds originally raised by the women through bridge parties, dues, and various other activities is now provided by the Jewish Family and Children’s Service as well as from a yearly stipend of $800 from the United Moes Chitim Fund, distributed under the aegis of the Festival Committee.
The United Moes Chitim Fund has been contributing funds to the Festival Committee for their Passover expenses since 1957. An article in the *Rhode Island Herald* of March 11, 1966 described this joint effort. “Between 150 and 175 persons at the Rhode Island Medical Center and the Ladd School will be given food for the holiday, through the ninth annual appeal of the United Moes Chitim Fund. . . . Food for the Seder at the State Institutions is prepared and served by the Ladies Festival Committee, and food for the eight days is taken there and to the Ladd School.” At the time this article was written there was but one Jewish prisoner and he was to be given Passover food, although he was not allowed to attend the Seder.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the type of service provided by these dedicated women no longer attracts volunteers. Most now appear to prefer to work in other ways. However, volunteers are still desperately needed to render the same services which the Festival Committee has always provided. At the present time the census of Jewish residents at Ladd School and at the Medical Center is high. In addition, there are many Jewish residents in the Geriatric Division of the state institutions, many of whom are living there because the Jewish Home for the Aged has been filled to capacity. The needs of these people have not diminished over the years. Of the original large number of volunteers only a handful of the faithful remain. They have provided for the needs of the patients and have assured that the Jewish holidays could be observed. They have brought to the Rabbis’ attention patients who may have been ill, or in cases of death they have arranged for Jewish burials. These few women have kept the unfortunate from being the “forgotten people.”

In a pencilled, hand-written draft of the Constitution, By-laws, and Rules of Order of the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association of the City of Providence, State of Rhode Island are stated the following objectives:

> We, the undersigned, do declare ourselves, an Association for mutual improvement in charitable affairs and for enlarging our fund, in the pursuit for which we desire to exhibit a due consideration for the opinions and feelings of others, to maintain and to seek truth in all our exercise. . . .

The many founders, the hard-working officers, and the members, too numerous to list here, were truly Jewish Women of the Years in which they gave so completely of themselves. They never felt the necessity to agitate for their rights as women. They attained the highest possible station in the scale of humanity through the un-
assuming dedicated manner in which they helped their fellow-man. They were and are our unsung heroines!

NOTES

8 The names of the state institutions and their organizational structure have varied over the years. In 1916 the following institutions were located in Cranston, R. I.: the State Hospital for the Insane, the State Alms House, the Work House and House of Correction, the State Prison, the Providence County Jail—all at Howard R. I.—the Sockanosset School for Boys, and the Oaklawn School for Girls. The Rhode Island School for Feeble-minded was located at Exeter, R. I. In the 1940s two major hospitals were identified at Howard: the State Hospital for Mental Diseases (Charles P. Fitzpatrick, M.D., Medical Superintendent) and the State Infirmary (William O. Rice, M.D., Medical Superintendent).
At this writing the latter facilities are united as the Rhode Island Medical Center, comprised of the General Hospital and the Institute of Mental Health, the latter including the Geriatric Division. The facility at Exeter is now the Dr. Joseph H. Ladd School. The former State Sanatorium at Wallum Lake (formerly a tuberculosis sanatorium almost exclusively) is now the Dr. Ubaldo E. Zambarano Memorial Hospital.

INTERVIEWS

Telephone interview with Mrs. Albert Cohen on August 19, 1975.
Interview with Mrs. Moe Cohen on June 27, 1975.
Interviews with Mrs. Samuel Sheffres on May 30, 1975; June 27, 1975; and August 8, 1975.
RHODE ISLAND MATERIALS IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS*

by Bernard Wax

This occasion provides a unique opportunity to examine the resources of the American Jewish Historical Society in a new light—the determination of the amount and nature of the material available in our collections on an individual state. In essence, it provides an opportunity to measure our capabilities and usefulness to both our staff and patrons.

To provide a background for discussing the materials relating to Rhode Island located in the Historical Society, something must also be noted about its founding and history, for the initial basis of our collections rests upon the philosophies and views of our founders, early leadership, as well as later and current personnel and orientation to the field of American Jewish history.

Important to note is the founding year of the Society, 1892, the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. Of equal influence was the early leadership—Oscar Straus, Cyrus Adler, Adolphus S. Solomons, and Henrietta Szold, all of whom were deeply interested in the early period of America and American Jewish history. Subsequent leaders, both professional and lay, were equally interested in the Colonial and Revolutionary period—A.S.W. Rosenbach, Captain N. Taylor Phillips, Max James Kohler, George Kohut, Jacques J. Lyons, Edward Coleman, and Isidore S. Meyer. There were also close ties with the oldest congregation in America, Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation.

As a result of these influences and orientation, there came to be a determined effort to emphasize the collection of material from the Colonial and early National periods.

The approach was not at all unusual, for it appeared to be the same type of orientation for many other local, state, regional, and national historical organizations. In addition, many of those associated with the founding of the Society were direct descendants of the early Jews in America, and their gifts of portraits, manuscripts, relics, and the like mirrored those associations and interests. A rigorous examination of our collections for these items would demonstrate that much came from families residing in America for several generations.

*Fourth Annual David Charak Adelman Lecture read at the twentieth annual meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association on May 19, 1974. Mr. Wax is Director of the American Jewish Historical Society.
With this background in mind, let us note how Rhode Island history is reflected in our holdings. For one thing, these interests are quite varied ranging from water colors and photographs to Yiddish theater posters and priceless manuscripts. The time span covered is from the earliest period of American Jewish history to the present day, where we attempt to chronicle events relating to the American Jewish response to current Israeli crises. As a result, our collecting activities are never-ending whether it be for Providence, Newport, or the other communities in which the Jewish population of Rhode Island resides.

Some strange, or at least unusual, titles and associations turned up. Little had I realized that one of the Society's founders and the past president, Oscar Solomon Straus wrote *Roger Williams, The Pioneer of Religious Liberty* in 1894. In 1930 another edition was published "with an interpretation by R.E.E. Harkness, Ph.D. and an address by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes." The half-title reads "this tercentenary edition is published by the Oscar S. Straus memorial association by special arrangement with the American Baptist Plistorical Society in connection with that organization's celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Rhode Island by Roger Williams."

For those interested in current fads as well as the activities of the Jewish Defense League and the Karate/Kung Fu physical defense academies, it may be of interest to know that among our Society's collections is a publication titled *Convention of Jewish Societies for Promoting Physical Culture Among the Jewish Masses* called by the Touro Cadets and arranged by the Montefiore-Touro Association dated Av 12, 5661 — July 28, 1901.

An unusual view of Jewish life is given in a Christian lady's reminiscences, Sarah S. Cahoone's *A Visit to Gran-papa or A Look at Newport* published in 1840. Apparently, the book was successful since it was issued in a second edition two years later with a less homespun title, *Sketches of Newport and Its Vicinity*. An even earlier published volume, Andrew Burnby's *Travels Through North America* referred to the Jewish community, a rather unique circumstance in a volume published in its third edition in 1798.*

The statistically minded and sociologically oriented would, of course, be interested in examining Sidney Goldstein's population survey sponsored by the General Jewish Committee of Providence as well as his subsequent 1968 study with Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans, Three Generations in a Jewish Community*. Both of these works have

*See page 35 of this issue of the Notes.
passed into the realm of history and should prove to be valuable resource documents in later years.

Also statistically oriented, but for a much earlier period, is the Massachusetts Historical Society 1914 publication, *Commerce of Rhode Island, 1726-1800* in which a number of Jews are included.

The subject of commerce constitutes a major portion of several manuscript collections. The subjects of these collections were, for the most part, prominent Colonial merchants or individuals interested in studying and researching this group. The major name which comes immediately to mind is Aaron Lopez, (1731-1782) about whom the Society has collected 6869 manuscripts arranged chronologically for the years 1752-1794. The great majority of the collection consists of account records, bills of sale, orders, shipping agreements, lists of sailors on various ships, repair records, and cargo invoices. Of particular interest are several documents that reveal Lopez as a supplier of kosher meat and religious articles to people in various American Colonies, Surinam, and Jamaica. Also included are copies of sailing lists, documents pertaining to Lopez’s naturalization, which shed light upon the status of a few applying for citizenship in Massachusetts, and a check to Lopez from the United States Government for a loan made during the Revolutionary War (1779).

The Jacques Judah Lyons Collection was compiled during Lyons’ lifetime (1813-1877), and some of the material goes back as far as 1728. The collection provides the opportunity to examine the relationships between Shearith Israel and Touro Synagogue (Jeshuat Israel, the Newport cemetery, and the Jewish community).

For those interested in the medical aspects of religious observance, the Moses Mendes Seixas Papers from 1755-1809 provide a letter describing the method of ritual circumcision dated in 1772 as well as a list of those circumcized by Seixas in Newport in 1775. Seixas was the first Masonic Master of St. John’s Lodge in 1808, and the Society is in possession of his Masonic manual. In addition to his religious medical duties as a *mohel* (ritual circumciser), Seixas had to support himself by shipping and importing. The Society holds his business documents from 1799-1809.

Other associated items are to be found in the Gratz Family Papers, material relating to Isaac Hart of Newport, and the Max James Kohler Collection.

But the concern of the American Jewish Historical Society is not only with the far distant past. The Phillips Family Papers include items...
from 1672-1954. Numerous items exist in our newspaper collection for the nineteenth century as well. Newport is included in stories dealing with the Synagogue and burial ground as well as with local news items in the 1850s and 1860s. References are readily to be found in the periodical index available for the *Asmonean, American Israelite, Jewish Messenger*, and *The Occident*. Providence assumes an importance in the last half of the 19th century with articles on the formation of B'nai Israel* and its subsequent history in the community. News items are found scattered through 1888, 1889, and 1899.

The twentieth century is represented by portions of the Phillips and Kohler Collections which are related to current events. The American Jewish Committee Office of War Records from 1919-1921 contain numerous references to Rhode Island boys in uniform.

The American Jewish Tercentenary Celebration (1951-1956) Collection and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds Records (1955-present) both serve as examples of Rhode Island activities in different areas.

Finally, mention must be made of the excellent resource, the publication of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. This publication is an invaluable resource for both professionals and amateurs. The quality of its papers and capable editing make for an additional substantial source of information and data, and it should be recognized as such by those attempting to understand the experiences of one state-wide Jewish community.

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*Later Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El).*
THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, held on Sunday, May 18, 1975 in the Jewish Community Center, Newport, Rhode Island, was called to order by the President, Erwin E. Strasmich at 3:50 P.M. Preceding the call to order, a day-long series of events in Newport was sponsored jointly with the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies and the Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine, Inc., with the assistance of the Newport Historical Society. The program was planned and coordinated by Norman T. Bolles, President of the League, Samuel Friedman, President of the Friends, and Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., Editor of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes and Vice President of both the League and the Friends. Each presided at various sessions throughout the day. The morning session and luncheon at the Treadway Inn, Thames Street, was attended by two hundred people from all the participating organizations. Additional persons joined the walking tours which followed and the exercises in the Synagogue.

The day's activities culminated in the Fifth Annual David Charak Adelman Lecture given by Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern, Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists and author of the definitive Americans of Jewish Descent, a compendium of family trees of every known Jewish family settled in America before 1840, soon to be published in a new edition. Rabbi Stern serves as genealogist of the American Jewish Archives and is chairman of the Executive Council of the American Jewish Historical Society. His topic was "The Jews of Colonial Newport".

The program with complete details of the day follows these minutes.

It was voted at the annual meeting to omit the reading of the secretary's Annual Report. Mr. Strasmich thanked those involved in planning the event-filled day. He introduced Mr. Bernard Wax, Executive Director of the American Jewish Historical Society, who extended greetings and once again praised the work of the Association.

Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer, reported a balance in the treasury of $1,613.86 and a total of 382 members. Finance Chairman, Louis I. Sweet, projected a balanced budget for the ensuing year of $5,150.00, and a surplus.

Mr. Melvin L. Zurier, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented for re-election the following slate of officers: Erwin E. Strasmich,
President; Benton H. Rosen, Vice President; Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Secretary; and Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer. Since there were no counter-nominations from the floor, Mr. Zurier made the motion that the secretary cast one ballot for the entire slate, and it was so voted.

Mr. Zurier announced that the dedication of the new building of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, in which the Association has its headquarters, would take place on Sunday evening, June 1, and invited all to attend. He suggested that a letter of appreciation to the Federation would be appropriate. Dr. Stephen Kaplan suggested that the next issue of the Notes be dedicated to the Federation as a mark of appreciation.

Mr. Samuel Friedman, encouraged by the success of the day, recommended that the Association and the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue plan a joint venture in celebration of the Bicentennial. Agreeing that this was an excellent idea, Dr. Goldowsky stated that the Association will be publishing a special Bicentennial issue of the Notes in any case.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 P.M. and was followed by a collation served on the lower floor of the building. The hostesses were Mrs. Bernard C. Friedman and Mrs. Samuel Gillson, members of the Board of the Society of Friends. This hospitable reception capped this historic and historical day.

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THE LEAGUE OF RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

SPRING MEETING

jointly sponsored by the

LEAGUE OF RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
and the
FRIENDS OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE
NATIONAL HISTORIC SHRINE, INC.

with the assistance of the
NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1975

at

Newport, Rhode Island
PROGRAM

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Registration—Treadway Inn, Thames Street

Lectures—Treadway Inn
1. RESTORATION OF THE TOURO SYNAGOGUE
   AND HISTORIC CEMETERY FENCES
   F. Cliff Pearce, Architect, National Park Service, United
   States Department of the Interior
2. WHERE THE COLONIAL JEWS LIVED
   Francine Gail Helfner

12:00 noon - 1:00 PM

Buffet Luncheon—Treadway Inn
Annual Meeting of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies
Presentation of the John Nicholas Brown Award of the League to
Mrs. George Warren, founder of the Newport Preservation Society

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Walking Tours
A. Historic Jewish Cemetery, Bellevue Avenue and Touro Street
B. Newport Historical Society, Touro Street
C. Touro Synagogue Museum, Touro Street

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Lectures—Touro Synagogue
1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE
   Rabbi Theodore Lewis of Touro Synagogue
2. THE JEWS OF COLONIAL NEWPORT
   Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern, Genealogist of the American Jewish
   Archives; Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists

3:30 PM

Annual Business Meeting, Rhode Island Jewish Historical
Association
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
by SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

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


   In the foreword on page x and on pages 100 and 101 are notes concerning Rabbi Raphael Iaim Isaac Carigal, the learned peripatetic preacher, who spent several months in Newport, Rhode Island in 1773. He died in Barbados on May 19, 1777 (old style) at the age of 48, and was buried in the cemetery there.

   On pages 117 and 118 are notations regarding Samuel Hart, merchant, who died in Bridgetown on October 15, 1773 of Putrid Fever at the age of 53. The inscription in Portuguese reads: "Here lies Mr. Samuel Hart of the City of New York, merchant, who has newly arrived from New Port in the Colony of Rhode Island in New England, North America . . . on October 15, 1773. . . ."


   Page 19. Mention of Barbadian Jews Mordecai Campanell and Moses Pacheco establishing a Jewish community in Rhode Island in 1673.

   Pages 50-51. Isaac Touro finds refuge in Jamaica in 1780.

   Page 88. Jews from Rhode Island among those forming the community in St. Eustatius.

   Page 90. Jacob Pollock and Isaac Hart of Newport attempted to reach refuge in St. Eustatius in 1780.


   Pages 5-6. Aaron Lopez, a brief sketch.

   Pages 6-7. The Touro family.

   Contains several errors.


   Newport or Rhode Island are briefly mentioned on pages 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, and 179.


Contains 10 facsimiles and a monograph by Karp describing the 10 items and giving a Selected Bibliography. All in soft covers in slipcase.

One of the items is "A Sermon Preached at the Synagogue, in Newport, Rhode Island, called 'The Salvation of Israel': On the Day of Pentecost, on the Feast of Weeks, the 6th day of the month Sivan, the year of the Creation, 5533: On May 28, 1773, Being the Anniversary of Giving the Law at Mount Sinai: By the venerable HOCHAM, the Learned RABBI HAIM ISAAC KARIGAL, of the City of Hebron, near Jerusalem In the HOLY LAND. Newport, Rhode Island: Printed and sold by S. SOUTHWICK, in Queen-Street, 1773." Probably the first Jewish Sermon in America to be published. Translated by Aaron Lopez.

The monograph carries the major title listed above and consists of 68 pages. Chapter 2 (pp. 11-17), titled "Emissary from Hebron," describes the Carigal item and its background. Portrait of Carigal and photograph of the interior of Touro Synagogue.

Chapter 10 of the monograph ("From Ararat to Zion") describes Mordecai Manuel Noah's plan to set up a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. On p. 60 he mentions Noah's proposal in 1821 to establish a Jewish settlement in Newport, Rhode Island.


Page 5, An account of the Touro brothers, Abraham and Judah, and their Boston philanthropies.


ERRATUM

RIJHN 4:505, (vol. 6) Nov. 1974: Caption under photograph of telephone call in 1915 incorrectly identifies Mayor Joseph H. Gainer as standing between Leon and Joseph Samuels. Mayor Gainer is seated at the telephone. Mayor Gainer's Executive Secretary stands between the Samuels brothers.
NECROLOGY

NATHAN A. BOLOTOW, M.D., born in Providence, Rhode Island, April 23, 1894, the son of the late Louis and Fannie (Greenberg) Bolotow.

A graduate of Tufts University Medical School, class of 1917, Doctor Bolotow also received a Master of Science degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He served overseas as an army medical officer in World War I. He was a former Chief of the Department of Ear, Nose, and Throat at The Miriam Hospital, where he had served as President of the Medical Staff for several terms. He had been an instructor at the Schools of Nursing of the Rhode Island and Pawtucket Memorial Hospitals. He taught also at the American Academy of Plastic Surgery in New York City and at the American Academy of Otolaryngology.

A Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, the International College of Surgeons, and the American Academy of Facial, Plastic, and Reconstructive Surgery, he was a Diplomate of the American Board of Otolaryngology. He was a member of the American and Providence Medical Associations and the Rhode Island Medical Society, in addition to the New England Otolaryngologic Society, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, and the American Laryngology, Rhinology, and Otology Society. After retiring from active hospital service, he became consultant at most of the hospitals in the metropolitan area.

Doctor Bolotow's civic and philanthropic activities included the presidency of the Jewish Family and Children's Service from 1955 to 1960, the vice presidency of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and service on the board of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. He worked in the field of emotionally disturbed children. Numerous papers in his specialty including plastic surgery were published in national medical journals.

Died in Boston, Massachusetts, October 31, 1975.

BEATRICE SYLVIA HANZEL, wife of Doctor Harold Hanzel, daughter of the late Louis and Gertrude (Epstein) Goldstein, was born in Providence, Rhode Island, March 23, 1917.

A resident of Providence until she moved to Warwick fifteen years ago, she was a member of Temple Beth Israel and its Sister-
hood, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the Providence Section of the National Council of Jewish Women; she was also a life member of the Fall River Jewish Home for the Aged. She served as a volunteer at the John E. Fogarty Center for Retarded Children and with the Golden Agers of the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, November 17, 1975.

LEONARD I. SALMANSON, born in Providence, Rhode Island on June 21, 1910, the son of Barnet and Elizabeth (Salk) Salmanson. He founded the Adams Drug Company in 1932 and as president and chief executive officer had control of 386 stores in 14 states, as well as a number of other holdings in other industries that the Salmanson family had been acquiring since 1958, among them Colt’s Plastics Company of North Grosvenordale, Connecticut, and Gong Bell Manufacturing Company, a toymaking firm in East Hampton, Connecticut. Among the drug store acquisitions were the Whelan Drug Store Chain, Nescott stores, Eckerd stores, and the Veazy Drug chain of Oklahoma City. In 1960 a merger with Lee’s Drug Stores, Inc. of Buffalo, New York, formed what the companies said at the time comprised one of the nation’s largest independent drug store chains.

He attended public schools in Providence. He was a board member of Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, the Jewish Family and Children’s Service: treasurer of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island; and a member of the Hebrew Free Loan Associations of Providence and South Providence.

He made several major contributions to Brown University and Bryant College over the years, including a grant a few years ago that was said to be one of the largest Bryant ever received. The Bryant dining hall was named after him in 1973. The following year he was named to the Bryant College Board of Trustees. The school awarded him an honorary degree of doctor of science in business administration in 1972. He was a founder of the Brown University Medical School where the physiology and biophysics laboratories were named in his honor in 1974.

Died in Providence, May 15, 1975.
Back Cover

The words appearing on the back cover were contained in a letter addressed to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport by George Washington in 1790. This letter was, in fact, a reply to Moses Seixas, the Warden of the Synagogue, inquiring of Washington about the disposition of the government in the matter of religious freedom. The phrases actually appeared in Seixas's letter of inquiry and were borrowed by Washington for use in his reply.

* * *

Rhode Island chose its Bicentennial symbol from a statewide competition. The initials R and I join the numerals 76 in commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776.
IN THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE IN NEWPORT

Here, where the noises of the busy town,
The ocean's plunge and roar can enter not,
We stand and gaze around with tearful awe,
And muse upon the consecrated spot.

No signs of life are here: the very prayers
Inscribed around are in a language dead;
The light of the "perpetual lamp" is spent
That an undying radiance was to shed.

What prayers were in this temple offered up,
Wrung from sad hearts, that knew no joy on earth,
By these lone exiles of a thousand years,
From the fair sunrise land that gave them birth!

Now as we gaze, in this new world of light
Upon this relic of the days of old,
The present vanishes, and tropic bloom
And eastern towns and temples we behold.

Again we see the patriarch with his flocks,
The purple seas, the hot blue sky o'erhead,
The slaves of Egypt, — omens, mysteries, —
Dark fleeing hosts by flaming angels led.

A wondrous light upon a sky-kissed mount,
A man who reads the great God's written law,
'Midst blinding glory and effulgence rare
Unto a people prone with reverent awe.

The pride of luxury's barbaric pomp,
In the rich court of royal Solomon —
Alas! we wake: one scene alone remains, —
The exiles by the streams of Babylon.

Our softened voices send us back again
But mournful echoes through the empty hall;
Our footsteps have a strange unnatural sound,
And with unwonted gentleness they fall.

The weary ones, the sad, the suffering,
All found their comfort in the holy place,
And children's gladness and men's gratitude
Took voice and mingled in the chant of praise.

The funeral and the marriage, now alas!
We know not which is sadder to recall;
For youth and happiness have followed age,
And green grass lieth gently over all.

Nathless the sacred shrine is holy yet,
With its lone floors where reverent feet once trod
Take off your shoes, as by the burning bush,
Before the mystery of death and God.

... Emma Lazarus, 1867
To bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance

[Signature]

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