From a photo of a portrait in oil on canvas (25 x 19 inches) attributed to Cosmo Alexander, a Scottish portrait painter who visited America from 1765 to 1771. The portrait is believed to have been painted in 1769-1770 during Alexander's sojourn in Newport, Rhode Island. Its present whereabouts is unknown. Alexander is best known in America as Gilbert Stuart's first teacher. (Antiques Magazine, November 1977, page 973 et seq.) Photo courtesy of M. Knoedler & Co., New York, N.Y.

For more on Isaac Touro see page 442.
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130 SESSIONS STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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Define Boy Scout: a Boy Scout is a polite young man who helps a little old lady cross the street. A cliché, of course, but the image is not far removed from the story of its origin. An anecdote is told of a boy in London, England (his name has never been discovered) who helped one William D. Boyce, a Chicago publisher and world traveler, find his way through the foggy streets to keep an appointment. The boy refused a tip, saying that he was a Boy Scout. The American, curious about the term, was informed that the movement had been started about a year earlier—in 1908—by a Mr. Robert S. Baden-Powell, who was a great English hero of the Boer War. Boyce was so impressed that he set about to learn all he could about this scouting movement for youth. There was a need to be met for the youth of the 20th century living in overcrowded cities and slums, the result of industrialization. These boys must be shown the excitement of the out-of-doors, the wonders of nature. On February 8, 1910 Boyce and a group of associates sought to obtain a charter of incorporation in Washington, D.C. for a new organization to be called the Boy Scouts of America.¹

The Boy Scouts of America was chartered in 1916 and is now protected by an Act of Congress. The President of the United States is honorary president of the organization. Nearly half of the 95,000 cub packs, scout troops, and explorer units have been sponsored by church groups—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.²

According to J. Harold Williams,³ long-time Chief Scout Executive of the Narragansett Council (Rhode Island), scouting came to Rhode Island in 1910. It began with small groups such as one organized among the Eddy Street gangs of South Providence and another for a dozen boys in the Washington Park area. Williams refers to the scout troop formed by Doctor Max B. Gomberg on Benefit Street, and he recalls that Walter Adler was a charter member. Doctor Seebert J. Goldowsky in his paper on Doctor Gomberg⁴ also refers to Gomberg as an early and active participant in the Boy Scout movement. In a recent telephone conversation, Walter Adler reminisced to this writer about his being one of the boys recruited by Gomberg. The doctor himself bought and paid for their Boy Scout uniforms, which he procured at the Outlet Company store. Another member of that 1910 pioneer scout troop was Herman Galkin.

---

¹J. Harold Williams (1897-1976) became Chief Scout Executive in 1918 at the age of 21. He retired in 1962.
The troop, Galkin recalls, met in What Cheer Hall, which was at 643 North Main Street, corner of Flint Street.

Just as William Royce had been inspired by the work of Baden-Powell, so too were Charles E. Mulhearn and G. Edward Buxton, Jr., of Rhode Island, who were desirous of forming a local state organization of Boy Scouts. They had not been aware of the establishment of the Boy Scouts of America by Boyce; nor were they willing to join an organization already in existence in Boston called the American Boy Scouts, sponsored by the newspaper, the *Boston American*. Mulhearn and Buxton obtained their source material directly from England and supervised the formation of five troops in Providence, made up of small groups such as those mentioned above. The Rhode Island Boy Scouts was incorporated on April 13, 1911. In 1917 the Rhode Island Boy Scouts merged with the Boy Scouts of America. The active operating group became the Greater Providence Council, Boy Scouts of America, while Rhode Island Boy Scouts retained its corporate identity as the trustee organization to hold property and trust funds. In 1930 the Greater Providence Council merged with the Newport Council, the Pawtucket-Central Falls Council, and the Woonsocket Council to form the Narragansett Council. Narragansett Council embraces the whole state of Rhode Island, part of Massachusetts, and a small portion of Connecticut.

The Outlet Company was the first distributor of uniforms and equipment. As J. Harold Williams wrote in his book, *Scout Trail*, "This is where I bought my first uniform in 1910—a little 'campaign' hat with a big tin Eagle and RIBS on the front, a little high-necked khaki jacket, khaki breeches and leggings attached, and a tiny haversack about big enough for a sandwich and a pickle."

For a period of almost nine years there is no record of a troop consisting exclusively of Jewish boys such as that organized by Doctor Gomberg. It lasted for only some seven months.

**Troop 10**

Harold C. Sydney has in his possession a snapshot album titled, *Greater Providence Council*, in which are listed the leaders of Troop 10. Sydney joined the troop at the age of 12. From the following list of leaders it would appear that this troop, which originally met in Peace Street School, began its existence in 1919: Maurice Goldsmith 1919-1921, Alfred Torgan 1921-1922, Abraham Woodoff 1922, Harry Seltzer 1922, Bradford Field 1922-23 (he filled in as a leader, having been ap-
pointed by Scout Headquarters), Albert Geffner 1924-1925, and Harold C. Sydney 1925. About 1923 Troop 10 came under the sponsorship of Temple Beth Israel. The troop moved to the Temple located on Niagara Street in a building which had originally been a German beer hall. The history of this active, spirited troop is recounted today by several of its original members.

Aaron Roitman said: “Troop 10 was so popular. Kids will always go where the best action is. We had boys come all across the city to join our troop. This was during the post-World War I years—1922-26. The troop got so big in numbers that, whereas a typical troop was four patrols—32 in all—we at one time had as many as 50 or 60, and when we went to camp we took over a whole campsite. We were very proud of that troop. We thought it was the greatest troop that ever existed. I was about 13 when I first joined. There were no Cub Scouts, and one had to be 12 to join.” Their Sunday hikes, Roitman explained, started at the end of the street-car line on Douglas Avenue. Their destination was Twin Lakes, where even in the winter they could camp out, play games, brush the snow away, and build a fire.”Our troop always marched in the Memorial Day parades”, Roitman recalled, “and when the various scout troops met in Roger Williams Park for Field Day, we were proud of our winning record in all categories—scouting skills, starting a fire, and competitive games. We were a very active, very enthusiastic group. We had our own newspaper.”

Troop 10, according to Harold Sydney, had organized an orchestra, and also had a baseball team.

At Boy Scout Headquarters on Broad Street in Providence, Rhode Island are many scrapbooks which “Chief” J. Harold Williams, the Scout Executive, had assembled. The large number of clippings from the Providence Journal during the years 1920-1930 demonstrate that newspaper's generosity in giving the Boy Scouts publicity. This was due directly to the great interest of John R. Rathom, Editor of the Providence Journal, who had become Scout Commissioner in 1911. “He threw himself and the influence of the Providence Journal behind Scouting. . . .” The reports of the various troop activities often filled an entire page of the Providence Sunday Jornal, and the sepia gravure section contained many pictures of Boy Scout activities. Each troop had a scout designated as scribe. It was his duty to send information about his troop's activities to the news column titled, “Activities of Boy Scouts”, with the sub-heading, “Reports of the Scribes”. This example of news from Troop 10 appeared in the Providence Sunday Journal of June 13, 1926:
Troop 10 held its annual Parents’ Night. With over 50 parents and friends attending, under the direction of Acting Assistant Scoutmaster, H. Sydney. Awards: Sidney Goldstein, best inspection (his reward—a free week at Camp Yawgoog). Medals were presented to Philip Finkle and Maynard Bliss. Harold Sydney was presented with a silver loving cup in appreciation for his work with the troop during the past year.

The Max Rosen family, which was active in the founding of Temple Beth Israel, was also involved in supporting Troop 10 as a Temple activity. Max Rosen’s name appears among the businessmen who acted as sponsors of the troop. (Sponsoring committees of troops were often businessmen who lent their names, assistance and money in starting a troop.) Benton H. and L. Herbert Rosen, his sons, were members of Troop 10. Benton Rosen remarked about this troop: “Beth Israel’s Troop 10 was so popular we had eight patrols in 1925.”

The Jewish Review (predecessor to the Rhode Island Herald) carried a column written by the late N. Russell Swartz. Swartz had become interested in boy scouting through the efforts of Herman Galkin. Although he had never been a boy scout himself, he recognized the value of the organization and acted as a kind of volunteer press agent for the various Jewish troops during the years 1922-1925. He lectured to boy scouts at troop meetings and wrote a column titled variously “Scouting Section”, “Scout News”, “Boy Scout Activities”, or “Boy Scout Report”. We are fortunate that some of these columns still survive. Writing in colorful and often flowery language, Swartz presents a vivid description of the activities of Troops 5, 10, 14, 20, 50, and 41 (the latter was made up in part of Jewish boys) during the early 1920s.

The following news items about Troop 10 are excerpted from Swartz’s columns.

It should be interesting for all scouts and those interested in this movement to know something about the history of this troop. A new troop, organized only two months ago [article is undated] with a handful of boys, now boasts of three patrols, and new recruits are continuously joining. Though this is a small troop, it won’t be long before it will rank beside those of longer existence. The three patrols now in existence are: The Wolf: H. Sharp, patrol leader; Flying Eagle: R. Gordon, patrol leader; and the Panther: O. Leach, patrol leader.

* * *
Taken at Camp Yawgoog in the '20s. Standing left to right Doctor Albert C. Berger and Herman Galkin. Seated, Albert Geffner and Ralph Fishbein.

Camp Yawgoog in 1922.
During the anniversary celebration next week they will hold on Wednesday, February 11th [refers to 15th Anniversary of the Boy Scout movement in 1925] a Parents Night and a fine entertainment is promised. It will be of a surprising nature. We will only say that the troop symphony orchestra of 20 violinists, its pianist, cornetist and drummer, should make many friends for Troop Ten and leader Earle Goldenberg.

* * *

Troop 10 of the Rhode Island Boy Scouts met last week at its rooms in the Niagara Street Temple under the leadership of Acting Scoutmaster Alfred Geffner. The recruiting which this patrol has been running lately will soon stop, because the quota is nearly filled. . . . Scoutmaster Galkin is to introduce the new game of volleyball on the game night.

* * *

Troop 10, Providence Conservative Temple, is showing the real scout spirit these days. It now consists of 6 patrols, 40 scouts. Last evening there was a campfire held which consisted of a program of songs, stories and stunts. In these activities Mr. Galkin and a "Mr. Casey", which was not his real name, but who proved to be a popular Jewish gentleman, showed great pep and entertainment qualities in their stories and songs.

* * *

In order to advance in Scout work Troop 10 is holding a meeting a week. . . . Every other Sunday the troop takes hikes. Last Sunday the scouts hiked to Woodville. Many tests were passed, and Scout games were played in the woods. A new outdoor sport which the troop is going in for is skiing. Members of the troop are buying skis, and it is hoped that we will have snow in order to allow for winter troop competition in skiing. Scoutmaster Geffner represented the troop at the Patrol Leaders' conference. His troop did its share in collecting toys and will also take part in the Haggai Lodge (of B'nai B'rith) chess and checker tournament as well as the 200 word patriotic essay contest.

* * *

Troop Ten is establishing a library of appropriate books on scouting and other good reading appropriate to young boys. The success of Troop 10 was undoubtedly due to its leadership. It was fortunate in the number of dedicated, enthusiastic young men who chose to join the troop. The esprit de corps which existed is reflected in
interviews with such former members as Aaron Roitman and Harold Sydney. In 1960 the troop held a reunion attended by some forty former Scouts at which Chief Scout Executive J. Harold Williams was the principal guest. That they have held reunions which were so well-attended reflects the impact which the years of scouting with this troop had on its members.

N. Russell Swartz illustrated the high quality of its leaders with these examples: “Three leaders were Scoutmaster Al Geffner, Assistant Scoutmaster Harold Sydney, and Senior Patrol Leader Sidney Kane. Scout folks who read their Bibles and prayer books properly realize how hard it is to measure up to Jewish and Scouting teachings. And those who have had the personal pleasure to meet and know Messrs. Geffner, Sydney, and Kane will feel personal pride when they realize that in these modern days of distractions from rather than attractions to what is best in Jewish life these three fellows—good Scouts all—are seeing to it that those who are members in Troop Ten shall—with their encouragement and teaching—grow up right in both individual, community and, of course, Jewish helpfulness and manliness. . . .” These three men, Swartz claimed, were responsible for demonstrating to those present at Parents Night what Scouting really meant and the result of discipline on the boys themselves. About Scoutmaster Geffner he wrote: “He took the troop from its start and made of it a unit of manliness, leading the Scouts by example to show the world what true Americans should be”. About Harold Sydney: “Scout folks and other friends of his have watched his physical, moral, and mental growth. His every word and deed spell helpfulness, preparedness and good cheer.” And regarding Sydney Kane: “He is not only wealthy in world’s goods, his is a cheerful smile and he both disciplines and cheers his boys on to greater usefulness and manliness.”

Jews and the Boy Scout Movement in Rhode Island

TROOP 5

Herman S. Galkin, who was with the Boy Scout movement since its inception in Rhode Island, felt that there was a great need for a troop of Boy Scouts composed entirely of Jewish boys. By organizing such a troop, not only would he interest these boys in routine scout work, but would be successful in arousing their interest in Jewish studies and activities. One of the troops which he established was chartered as Troop 5 and met at the Hebrew Educational Institute at 65 Benefit Street. It was formed about 1920, Galkin believes. Among the early leaders of this troop were Aaron Norman, Assistant Scoutmaster; Joseph Pulver and Edward Gertscov, Acting Scoutmasters; and Sydney Rabinowitz, Senior Patrol Leader.
A prominent activity of Troop 5, undertaken in 1921, was their work in radio then in its infancy. Initial steps in the radio work were taken when Herman Galkin, then Assistant Scoutmaster, built a loose coupler set. The boys searched the air for newly organized broadcasting stations during the winter of 1921-1922. Their enthusiasm led to the purchase of a larger receiving set and amplifier, popularly called a loud speaker, which enabled them to bring in stations from greater distances and furnish their friends with more varied entertainment. Their work with radio was carried on in an area on the top floor of the Heberw Educational Institute which they called “The Wireless Den” (see picture page 349). Radio station KDKA at Pittsburgh was immensely popular at the time, although they were able to receive signals from many other stations at similar or greater distances.

Soon radio was used not only for the entertainment of members of the troop, but also to provide music for the Sunday evening meetings of the YMHA and YWHA housed in the same building. The troop found other ways of utilizing their radio expertise to do “good turns”. They installed a receiving set at the Jewish Orphanage. Assisted by Station 1-AMD, Pawtucket, Howard Thornley in charge, they sent a special program through the air to the orphanage. “Mr. Thornley had been given the names of some of the children at the orphanage, and he spoke to them during the course of the program. The whole event was so mystifying to the youngsters that they shouted answers to the announcer, most of them believing that he would be able to hear them over the wonder instrument which was entertaining them.”

Further, Herman Galkin (see picture, page 349) convinced the directors and officers of the Rhode Island Hospital to allow his boys to install a set in one of the large wards. He had had a great deal of difficulty in overcoming their concern that there might be danger from fire induced through the receiving set. “You will never realize how much that meant to the poor sick people in that ward,” recalled Galkin.

Swartz commented thus on the radio set-up in Rhode Island Hospital:

To those patients in Ward C at the Rhode Island Hospital, who were never offered the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the real spirit of Jewish idealism, were given that opportunity by the Troop Five Boy Scouts of America on Sunday evening, December 23. As the announcer at WJAR, the Outlet Company, said to his radio audience, “This concert has been supplied especially for Boy Scouts of Troop 5 who are giving concerts at the Rhode Island
Radio room at the YMHA building on Benefit Street. Herman Galkin at right.

Boy Scouts of Troop 5, Providence, entertaining patients at Rhode Island Hospital with radio on movable table. Courtesy of the Boy Scout Foundation.
Hospital. We hope they will enjoy it. These scouts are to be thanked for their thoughtfulness”. Also, Roxy at the Capitol Theatre broadcasting station in New York made reference to Troop 5 and its good turns. “Roxy” is Mr. Rothafel*, owner of the Capitol Theatre.

Because of the primitive state of radio at that time (1922) as Galkin recalled it, they could not always depend upon the reception by their sets of signals from the radio stations. They protected themselves when broadcasting to a home for the aged, a hospital, or other group by having a live program in progress simultaneously at Thornley’s home on Belmont Street in Pawtucket. Their set could be tuned in to a transmitter at his home, which broadcast live music under the direction of Israel Lewis, a cellist and teacher; with Sidney B. Lewis, violinist; and Edith B. Lewis, pianist.

Other beneficiaries of the Troop 5 radio set-up were the residents of the Home for Aged Women on Tockwotten Street, who were entertained in the same manner as were the hospital patients. Regarding these programs Swartz commented in his column: “It is to be grieved that many of the old ladies there happen to be hard of hearing. In fact, some of them are deaf. Scoutmaster Galkin overcame many of these cases by supplying them with phones so that almost every lady was able to get the program which was given. It is amusing to observe how pleased these ladies are to be thus entertained, and their antics show how they marvel at the wonder of hearing from the outside world again.”

“Further recognition of Troop Five’s reputation in radio work was made when Joe Galkin was chosen to take charge of the radio booth at the Patrol Leaders’ Conference held last week. He chose a committee to assist him comprised of other Scouts of Troop Five,” wrote Swartz in another column.

During the winter season of 1922-1923 a Radio Club was formed within the troop with Aaron Norman as instructor. Norman was an experienced wireless operator. He made it a rule that each boy must build a set of his own, but that first he must master the code. These boys continued to set up radio receivers in various places—at the Providence City Hospital tuberculosis ward, in homes for the aged and infirm, and in the homes of shut-ins.

The remarkable work performed by these scouts was recognized in December 1923, when they won a contest run by Radio Broadcast Magazine of New York, in which they competed against all Boy Scout

*Samuel L. Rothafel, New York theater executive.
troops in America. The award honored the many achievements of Troop 5 in promoting radio technology among its members. Their activities were described in an article written by scouts Louis B. Rubinstein and Joseph Galkin, covering a period of almost two years up to the date of the contest. The award was acknowledged by National Scout Executive James E. West,* who headed the Boy Scouts of America and was editor-in-chief of Boy's Life. Thus Troop 5 became known throughout the country for its remarkable work with radio. Galkin has in his files many letters of congratulation on the work done by his scouts. One such letter was written by Isaac Woolf, President of Hebrew Educational Institute, dated December 18, 1923: “At a meeting of the Executive Board of the Hebrew Educational Institute a unanimous vote of congratulations was extended to Troop Five for their excellent work with radio. The Board was very much pleased to hear that out of 15,000 troops in the United States Troop Five was the successful winner of the Radio Set.”

The early radio program of Troop 5 provided many young persons an opportunity to hear historic broadcasts such as that reported by Swartz in his column:

On Monday evening Acting Scoutmaster Herman S. Galkin invited a number of friends as well as members of the Junior Society of the Institute and members of the Fifth Troop to the Wireless Den on the top floor of the Institute where all heard a remarkable and interesting radio program, the feature of which was an address by President Coolidge commemorative of the late President Harding. It was a wonderful impressive and sincere eulogy.

Although the radio aspect of the Troop 5 activities received much publicity, it was but a portion of the overall program of the troop. Troop 5 presented before the members of the Men’s Club of Temple Beth-El a play written, directed, and acted solely by themselves. It was titled: “Scouting in our Community” (see program, page 352).

Troop 5 is one of the oldest in Providence. Its Scoutmaster is Joe Pulver. . . . this troop shows what Boy Scouts of America really is. Their cheering is wonderful. It rings true. It is so too in their various activities like boxing, test passing, business meetings, etc. Basketball especially against opposing teams is a favorite sport with them too, but best of all they demonstrate a wonderful spirit in thoughtfulness of others.”

*National Chief Scout Executive from 1911 to 1945.
BE PREPARED

SCOUT NIGHT

"Scouting in our Community"

Presented for the Members of the Men's Club of the Temple Beth-El and their friends by

TROOP FIVE, B. S. A. Providence

Tuesday, April 29, 1924

Written, Directed, and acted solely by Scouts and Officers of Troop Five

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Given in Order of Their Appearance)

Announcer—A. S. M. PULVER

Peewee ...................... Cub Scout Daniel Welsinger
Pip ................................ S. P. L. Sidney Rabinowitz
Billy ............................. Scout Mitchell Gertz
Patrol Leader ....................... A. P. L. Norman Miller

Four Scouts  ......................

Chubby ............................. Scout Harold Rotman
The Sissy ............................ Scout Joseph Levy
S. M. ............................. S. M. H. S. Galkin
A. S. M. ............................. A. S. M. Edward Gershkoff
The Mother .......................... P. L. Joseph Galkin
The Father ............................ Scout Norman Rand
The Troop ............................ (See Back of Program)

OUR TALENT

Violinist ............................. Scout Abraham Ehrlich
Violinist ............................. Scout Harold Rotman
Saxophone ............................ Scribe A. Bander
Piano ............................... Scribe A. Bander
Banjo ................................. Aaron Norman, A. S. M.
Violin ................................. Aaron Norman, A. S. M.

Singers

A. P. L. Norman Miller  Scout Jacob Gordon
P. L. Joseph Galkin  S. P. L. S. Rabinowitz
Troop 5 had earned a reputation for "good turns". They gave food baskets to poor families. In 1923 they ranked third in toy collections, amassing a record 500 toys. The following year they distributed Thanksgiving dinners which they gathered from charitable people. They collected 100 toys, more than any other in the Greater Providence Council.

Their favorite sites for Sunday troop hikes were Sunset Point and Boulder Woods, both in the Lincoln Woods Reservation. They were introduced to the "new" game of volleyball, but had to use a rubber balloon on account of the low-hanging chandeliers and the lack of space.

**Troop 41**

Troop 41, an all Jewish troop formed of boys from the Jewish Orphanage, also owed its existence to Herman Galkin. Although the Jewish Orphanage had begun its operations in 1909, it was not until about 1922 that Galkin organized a troop in their Orphanage home which was then located on North Main Street. The troop lasted until the official end of the Orphanage in 1942.

An undated newspaper clipping captioned "Scoutmaster Galkin Installs Troop 41", reported the following:

Most interesting exercises took place at the Jewish Orphanage when there was conducted the official opening and installations of officers of Troop No. 41, Boy Scouts of America.

The investiture ceremony of the troop was performed by Scoutmaster Herman S. Galkin, assisted by members of Troop No. 5. The duties of the various officers of the troop were explained by scouts from Troop No. 5, which formed the degree team. Senior Patrol Leader Joseph Pulver, Patrol Leader Joseph Galkin, Scribe Abraham Goldstein, and Patrol Leader Edward Gershkoff explained the duties of the officers. Two selected boy scouts of Troop No. 5 explained the meaning of the various scout laws while Scoutmaster Galkin also addressed the candidates explaining to them scouting in general and the meaning of the oath that they were taking on becoming invested as 'regular, full-fledged scouts'. The oath was then administered to the many candidates.

Several well known men addressed the assembly. Mr. Bradford H. Field, assistant scout executive, told the boys of the help he has always received from Troop No. 5. The most welcome news of the evening came from Mr. Archibald Silverman, President of the Orphanage. He announced that, when the new building which is to
house the activities of the Jewish Orphanage is completed, within it will be a big gymnasium which will be given over to the scouts to carry out their program more efficiently. Mr. C. Joseph Fox congratulated the boys upon being able to be boy scouts, stating that there was no such thing when he was a youngster, and concluded with the remark, "I am sorry not to be able to be a scout along with you boys". Mr. Woolf, Superintendent of the Orphanage, wished them the best of luck, promising wholehearted assistance to the youngsters over whom he acts in the capacity of a father.

Charles Eisenberg was appointed Scribe. Officers of the troop: Herman Galkin, Scoutmaster; Charles A. Gomberg, Assistant Scoutmaster; Max Simon, Senior Patrol Leader; Samuel Appleman, Patrol Leader; Charles Parson, Patrol Leader.

Among those present at the investiture ceremonies were: Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Silverman; Mr. and Mrs. Albert Cohn; Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Goldowsky; Mr. and Miss Rothschild; Mr. Isaac Woolf, president of the Hebrew Educational Institute; and Miss Minnie Tatz, Scoutmistress of the Jewish Girl Scout Troop.

Further accounts of the troop's activities are taken from "Scout News" written by N. Russell Swartz, presumed to have occurred during the first three years of the troop's existence:

This troop was formed about nine months ago with twelve scouts. Now there are fourteen as well as three associate members. . . . Abie Rosenberg has been appointed instructor of games, and whenever he gets a spare moment from his regular occupation, he takes a run over to the public library where he reads up on everything he can find on games that boys can play. Then when he gets a chance he attends a meeting of Troop 41 and teaches the scouts the games he has read about. . . . In community work such as the recent toy drive, the troop was way up near the top of the list. Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner Herman S. Galkin, who is responsible for the existence and good showing of the Orphanage troop, will lead the boys on a hike next Sunday.

* * *

These scouts are not only strong on physical good showing, they recently took part in a play written by one of their members entitled, 'The Country School House', and a dramatic recitation called, 'The Death of Benedict Arnold'. The troop has two patrols called the Fox and Tiger Patrols.
The Haggai Lodge of B'nai B'rith sponsored an evening reception which was called Scout Night. In anticipation of this affair the Jewish troops were invited to hold chess and checker tournaments. The winner would receive an award of a cup. Swartz gives an account of this tournament:

Evidently Troop 41 had no difficulty in winning the Haggai Lodge Checker Cup. Dr. Albert Berger, president of the Haggai Lodge, made an appropriate address, and one of the scouts of Troop 41 gave a speech of acceptance. It was here that we were informed that though Troop 41 had won the Haggai Lodge Chess Cup still they felt that they won it too easily because the other scouts did not understand the game as well as they. So they returned the cup to Mr. Galkin to be used as a reward for efficiency in sports instead.

"In a recent inspection of Troop No. 41 conducted by Assistant Scout Executive Field of the Greater Providence Council, a 'perfect score' was reported by this troop which consists of boys in the Home and others of the immediate neighborhood", according to Swartz. He added, "Though this troop has no scoutmaster, they are lucky in that Mr. Henry Woolf, Superintendent, takes an active interest in the troop and helps them in the scout work. Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner Galkin comes to every meeting." Swartz wrote further about this troop as follows:

Last Sunday evening Troop 41 presented Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner Herman Galkin with a silver loving cup bought out of funds saved by the members of this troop . . . . this is a real loving cup and because of the thrift and zeal of these lads it speaks a language that only true love, loyalty, and the finest of scout ideals understands.

Troop 41 Boy Scouts celebrated its second anniversary at its quarters in the Jewish orphanage. Members of Troop 10 and 5 attended. Dr. Albert Berger told stories and sang camp songs while Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner Herman Galkin opened the exercises with an address. . . . The Goldstein medal for camp spirit was presented to Acting Senior Patrol Leader Louis Kramer.

That scouts are helpful and friendly is to be demonstrated by Troop 41 who are to play an important role in the official opening of Troop 50 at Temple Beth-El.

A condensed report of this troop would be simply this: they are real 100 per cent boy scouts . . . . they can put many folks to shame by their physical and especially their mental ability.
Still preserved is a copy of the so-called semifinal edition of a newspaper written and published by the Eagle Patrol of Troop 41, *The Eagle Tribune*, “New News of Troop 41”. Scouts of Troop 41 were listed as follows: The Scoutmaster was Herman Galkin and Assistant Scoutmaster Ralph Fishbein. The Eagle Patrol consisted of Patrol Leader Nathan Bromberg, Scribe Louis Kramer, Harold Ackerman, Carl Zundell and Max Simons. The Narragansett Patrol comprised Patrol Leader Charles Izenstein, Abraham Wolfe, one Seltzer, and one Krakowitz, not otherwise identified. The publication reported that on March 8, 1925 Bromberg and Kramer went on a 14 mile hike, while on the next week Simons and Wolfe would undertake the same test. It was also reported that Max Simons had received a medal for writing the best composition on the subject “The Contribution of the Jews to America.”

It appears that Simons and Wolfe did complete the hike on March 15, 1925, for a composition describing that hike is still preserved by Herman Galkin, for whom it was written. The route followed by the hikers starting at the Orphanage, went south on North Main Street and then along Benefit, Waterman, and Canal Streets. They continued up Westminster Street to Plainfield Street, where they boarded a trolley car to King's Park,* their ultimate destination. There they explored the woods and a log cabin. They saw what appeared to be a castle, but turned out to be King’s observatory. Following the Indian Trail, they discovered a large stone erected in memory of the Kings’ ancestors, dated 1757. These and other anecdotes about the hike were written by Simons in a clear descriptive manner in a handwriting reflecting hours of good penmanship training.

**Troop 50**

While the files of the origins and applications for charter for all Boy Scout troops in Rhode Island are stored at Boy Scout Headquarters on Broad Street in Providence, information only for Troop 50 among the Jewish troops was available for review. This troop, which was to meet at Temple Beth-El on Broad Street, was given the number 50. Its charter was dated January 12, 1925, and its sponsor was the Men's Club of Temple Beth-El, J. L. Landauer, President. The first Scoutmaster was Abraham L. Abel with Walter M. Cobe and Lester Selonik as his assistants. The troop committee consisted of three businessmen, George J.

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*Now Neutaconkanut Park, formerly in Johnston. Deeded to the City of Providence by the late Abbey A. King. The Observatory was erected about 1920 by Mrs. King atop the 299 foot hill as a memorial to the King family, one of the oldest in the area. The 60 foot tower, constructed of cement blocks and topped by an observation cupola, was burned to rubble by vandals in 1925. Ed.*
Lederer, jewelry manufacturer; A. L. Abel, jewelry manufacturer; and David Gilman, dental laboratory owner. Fifteen boys made up the original troop, their ages ranging from 12 to 15 years. They were Isidore Ackerman, Jack Anhalt, Louis Blackman, Louis Bornstein, Albert Cohen, Bernard Cohen, David Cohen, Harry Feingold, Samuel Gorman, Isidore Kirschenbaum, Abraham Ponce, Lester Robinson, William Rosendale, Robert Sharp and Sidney Silverman. By the following year the membership had increased to 33. Among the new members were Elmer Sydney, Murray Trinkle, Albert Cohn, Nathan Chaiken, and Abraham and Julius Bloom.

In a Boy Scout column in the Providence Sunday Journal of February 15, 1925 appeared the following news item: “Troop 50—an enthusiastic audience gathered in the auditorium of Temple Beth-El to attend the inauguration of the troop last week. This troop is being backed by the Men’s Club. The meeting opened with selections by Troop 10’s orchestra. Boys from Troops 5, 10, 41, and 50 gave the pledge of allegiance. Herman Galkin invested the troop committee.”

Swartz described the inauguration of the troop in more colorful language:

There was a gathering of the parents interested in the inauguration of Troop 50. Mr. Abe Abel, Chairman and Messrs. Daniel Gillman, George Lederer and H. I. Stirling were to be dubbed committeemen of the troop. Scribe Jack Anhalt, Junior Patrol Leaders: Al Cohen, Robert Sharp and William Rosenbaum and the Tenderfoot Scouts were also dubbed. . . . Scout Joseph Galkin gave a Scout oration. He told of its development in this manner. First there was the great Jewish Scout Abraham, then came the Knights of the Middle Ages, who by their chivalry to the old men and women and young children, in fact, to all who suffered, the way real Scouts should practice to do their daily Good Turns to others. And finally came the pioneers who bravely led on the Tenderfoots from the East and who handed to our modern Scouts their Oath and Laws. . . . Assistant Chief Executive Nelson A. Sly compared Troop 50’s Tenderfoot Scouts to a ship going down the ways. The ship and the Tenderfoot Scouts themselves must be prepared to weather the storm. . . . One of the main things that contributed to this enjoyment was the Boy Scout Symphony Orchestra of Troop 10. It previously had only ten days of practice, but all played with such musical pathos that it was popularity at first sight—and sound. Its leader is Carl Goldenberg and in its membership are: Walter Nel-
son, pianist; Arthur Bander and Abe Lisker, Saxophonists; Harold Sharp, drums; Sidney Liebe, Maurice Fox, Bernard Rosenthal, Myles Sydney, and Fred Summerfield, violinists.

As the organization of the Boy Scouts of America has been advancing along the road to constantly greater achievements, so the opening of Troop 50 is remarkable for another era in the advance of scouting. Whereas it is the 15th birthday of Scouting, it is, of course, the first one of Troop 50. The founding of this troop has the stamp of approval of Temple Beth-El—one of the first and a leading representative Jewish congregation in Providence, for it is the Temple’s Men’s Club who are the sponsors and are shouldering the task of the future progress of this troop. Then it is another Scouting achievement, as it was Assistant Deputy Commissioner Galkin who really deserves the credit for starting this troop and well may be called its “father”.

The progress of this troop is recorded in the files at Boy Scout Headquarters. Twenty-eight scouts had purchased uniforms, but the remainder could not afford them. Under a category in the file designated “Good Turns”, it is reported that this troop had collected and distributed toys at Christmas; they had helped the Providence Journal distribute Christmas dinners; and they had assisted at Parents’ Night, Men’s Club Night, and Synagogue services. Another news item indicated that in 1928 Joseph Pulver had applied for the position of Scoutmaster. On his application was the information that he had been Assistant Scoutmaster of Troop 5 from 1921 to 1923.

TROOP 20

The Scouting News section of the Providence Sunday Journal, November 13, 1927 reported the origin of Troop 20 at Temple Emanuel. “The first official meeting of the troop was held Tuesday, November 1st, at Temple Emanuel. Goldsmith, Koppelman, and Brown were dubbed Tenderfoot Scouts. A talk was given by Herman Galkin. Rabbi Israel Goldman and Benjamin Novgrad were troop committeemen and William Hyman was installed as Scoutmaster. Myles Sydney was Senior Patrol Leader. Russell Brown, Jerome Cohen, Norman Alper, and Lester Bernstein were Patrol Leaders and William Woolf, Scribe.”

There was further reference to the Emanuel troop in the Providence Sunday Journal of January 29, 1928: “Troop 20 went on a hike to Woodville under leadership of Al Geffner. The ‘Hot Knishes’ defeated the ‘Bagle’ boys in a game of hockey.”
Jews and the Boy Scout Movement in Rhode Island

TROOP 14

Among the Jewish Boy Scout troops listed in columns written by Swartz was Troop 14 which met at Candace Street School. While it had some Jewish boys as members, Galkin recalls that it also had a number of non-Jewish boys and was not sponsored by a Jewish group. According to an article in the *Jewish Advocate* of Boston, Massachusetts, November 1, 1923 written by Russell Swartz, Troop No. 14 met at the Candace Street School. Morris Conn was Assistant Scoutmaster; Jacob Seup, Acting Assistant Scoutmaster; and Abraham Tubman Senior Patrol Leader. While the troop was non-sectarian, more than half of the membership was Jewish. Regarding this troop, Swartz wrote on another occasion: "Troop No. 14 is one of the few that takes boys of other creeds into its membership other than Jewish boys. . . . This troop is live in its activities and has 32 scouts in the troop. It also has three patrols: Flying Eagle, A. Tubman, Patrol Leader; Beaver, Benjamin Weiner, Patrol Leader; Lions, Abraham Goldstein, Patrol Leader. . . . The troop goes on hikes every Sunday, and at the last meeting Committeeman Swartz gave a report of the scout conference recently held in New York."

TROOP 1—"THE FIRST PROVIDENCE TROOP"

This troop met at Broad Street School in Washington Park and is included in this article on Jewish Boy Scouts, because it is an example of a non-sectarian troop in which the majority of the boys were Christian. Active in this troop were Seebert J. Goldowsky and Charles Potter,** both later physicians in the community. Doctor Goldowsky joined in 1919 and was active in the troop for about 9 years. He regularly went to Camp Yawgoog with his troop. Although boys from Jewish troops would attend Jewish Sabbath services, he did not feel comfortable joining them since the boys in his own troop attended Protestant services on Sunday mornings. Goldowsky rose through the ranks—first class scout, patrol leader, senior patrol leader and assistant scoutmaster. Although the two boys were not with troops identified as Jewish, they were singled out by Swartz in his articles, in one of which he reported: "At a Scout reunion and conference held at the new Commercial High School (1924) another Jewish Scout was very prominent there. His name is Potter and as a

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*This troop was a direct descendant of the first troop in Providence organized under the old Rhode Island Boy Scouts. It chose to be designated as "The First Providence Troop", which in fact it was, rather than Troop 1. It also called itself "The Pioneer Troop" and adopted a neckerchief with a pioneer scout as its motif. Ed.

**Doctor Charles Potter was tragically killed by a homicide's bullet in 1970 in his 33rd year.
prominent member of Camp Tuocs (a division of Camp Yawgoog) he led in the cheering for that spot." In another story Swartz noted: "Jewish Boy Scouts receive merit badges at the Boy Scout Court of Honor which met in the Superior Court House". There was an address by Mayor Joseph Gainer, who awarded merit badges to 57 scouts, of whom nearly one fifth were Jewish. Among the recipients was Seebert Goldowsky of Troop 1.

**MEMORIAL SERVICES**

Scout participation in Memorial Day Parades and grave decoration went back to the start of the movement. And we paraded on Armistice Day when those processions were begun. Troops participated in their own communities. Then there were great parades when all the Council came to Providence—Scout Anniversary marches, WPA, Civil Defense and United Fund processions.

Herman Galkin felt strongly that the Jewish Boy Scouts should be involved in more than just marching on special holidays. He instituted the practice of decorating Jewish soldiers' graves. As he said in a recent interview, "It isn't just a Jewish holiday (referring to Memorial Day), it's an American holiday and these boys are Americans." This practice, which Galkin encouraged became an annual feature of the observance of Memorial Day at the Jewish cemeteries. The announcement of the 1923 Memorial Day Services appears on page 361.

The *Jewish Review* of May 25, 1923 reports the plans for these Memorial Day services:

The solemn task of honoring the Jewish soldier dead will again occupy the attention of Troop 5, Young Men's Hebrew Association Boy Scouts, on Memorial Day when the entire organization will motor to the Lincoln Park Cemetery and thence to the Temple Beth-El Cemetery on Reservoir Avenue to conduct memorial services over the graves of the fallen heroes and decorate them with flowers and wreaths. . . . The Scouts will assemble at the gates of the cemetery under the leadership of Herman Galkin, Scoutmaster of the troop. Cantor Smith and Rabbi Israel S. Rubenstein will conduct the services. Following the prayer, taps will be sounded by the company's buglers. . . .

In 1924 an elaborate ceremony was planned to honor Colonel Harry Cutler. In past years the Colonel Harry Cutler Post No. 3 of the Jewish Veterans of the Wars of the Republic, Bronx, New York had sent a
Memorial Day Services

In honor of the Jewish men who died in the World War

LINCOLN PARK CEMETERY

Wednesday, May 30, 1923
12 o'clock noon

Rabbi Israel S. Rubenstein and Cantor Meyer Smith will officiate.


You are cordially invited to honor the memory of the Jewish Men who gave their lives to insure us of American freedom and prosperity

These exercises will be conducted under the auspices of the Y. M. H. A. Boy Scouts
wreath for the decoration of the grave by Boy Scouts, but that year for the first time they visited Providence. It was fitting that Colonel Harry Cutler, nationally prominent as a Jewish leader, should also be honored by the Boy Scouts. Colonel Cutler was the first chief scout commissioner of the Boy Scouts of Rhode Island."

Many letters were exchanged between the New York post and Galkin, evidence of the considerable effort involved in bringing them to Rhode Island for the two-day visit. "Archibald Silverman called me—I was only a young fellow at the time—'Mr. Galkin, I know you are working hard on this (bringing these men to Providence)—what can I do to help?' I told him what the program was. Mr. Silverman invited the men who were coming down from New York to a luncheon after the affair was over. He arranged a luncheon at the Biltmore Hotel and took care of all of their expenses. No one asked him to do that. He said Colonel Cutler was a friend of his. That was the type of person he (Archibald Silverman) was".

The visit of the representatives of the Colonel Harry Cutler Post received much publicity in the newspapers:

Tribute to the memory of Colonel Harry Cutler, late of Providence, was paid yesterday afternoon by Providence Jews and a delegation from Colonel Harry Cutler Post No. 3 Jewish Veterans of the Wars of the Republic of New York. Memorial exercises were conducted at Mr. Cutler's grave in the Sons of Israel and David Cemetery on Reservoir Avenue at noon, following morning services at Lincoln Cemetery in memory of Jewish War Veterans. In past years Colonel Harry Cutler Post has sent a wreath for the decoration of the grave by Jewish Boy Scouts of this city. This year, for the first time, the post named in honor of the nationally known Jewish leader, visited this city. Exercises at Mr. Cutler's grave opened with prayer, led by Joseph Schlossberg. This was followed by addresses by Rabbi Morris Schussheim, Dr. Samuel I. Kennison, and Brig. General William F. Flanagan, retired. . . . Patriotic songs were sung by Jewish Girl Scouts. A firing squad from the New York delegation fired a salute over the grave and Taps was sounded by bugler, Harold Sydney. Following these exercises the visitors from New York were entertained by Archibald Silverman at a luncheon at the Biltmore Hotel. In the afternoon they participated in exercises at the grave of Roger Williams in Roger Williams Park. [See photo page 363]
First Memorial Day Exercises in Rhode Island in honor of Jewish soldiers who died in World War I under the auspices of Troops 5 and 10. Reservoir Avenue Cemetery of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, May 30, 1922. Three large wreaths were placed on Colonel Harry Cutler’s grave, one of which was the gift of the Cutler Post of New York, Jewish Veterans of Wars of the Republic. Cantor Joseph Schlossberg to the right (in sailor straw hat); behind him in campaign hat, Herman Galkin; in forefront in officer’s uniform, Doctor William F. Flanagan, Colonel of the Rhode Island First Light Infantry; to the left of the grave, Samuel I. Kennison, M.D., Lt. U.S. Navy Medical Corps., ret. (in uniform) and Archibald Silverman (in morning dress). Also scouts of Troops 5 and 10 and ex-servicemen in uniform.
Dr. Samuel I. Kennison, Nathan Temkin, Manuel Bloom and Herman S. Galkin were the committee in charge of the affair."

Swartz adds his colorful interpretation of the day's happenings under the heading, "A big day in Jewish Scout Life:"

At quarter past nine last Friday morning, four troops of the Boy Scouts of America, Greater Providence Council and two troops of local Girl Scouts were to be seen marching manfully and patriotically in the parade of remembrance in honor of the hero dead of three great wars of our glorious nation. If one were to look closely at their troop flags the numbers 5, 10, 14, and 41 would be seen fluttering in the breezes of a beautiful spring day. Just back of and bearing these colors were Boy and Girl Scouts of Jewish faith and American spirit. Then Troops 20 and 28 came along. The former were under the leadership of Miss Minnie Tatz. . . . Shortly after the arrival of the scouts, who formed a Guard of Honor and stood at attention at the gates of the cemetery, the Colonel Harry Cutler Post of New York arrived. They had come all the way from New York City to do honor to their friend and comrade, that lovable man who died in the service of his people and his nation.

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION

"It is the brotherhood of scouting that lies at the very heart of the movement . . . locally and nationally and internationally . . . to build understanding."

"No matter what the boy may be—Catholic, Protestant or Jew—the fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before him."

These comments are from Will Oursler. On this same subject he emphasized that the Boy Scouts of America, while recognizing the importance of religion to every boy, is itself non-sectarian. It is of the belief that each boy's religious education should be provided not through Scouting but through his own church or synagogue. Boys of the various faiths learn that those of other faiths are not so different from themselves.

Religion and belief in God—by whatever road the boy chooses—is the foundation rock on which scouting is built . . . nearly half of the units in America are church-sponsored; many others are sponsored by organizations closely affiliated with church such as Knights of Columbus, YMHA, B'nai B'rith, etc. There is more than cooperation actually between Scouting and the great religious faiths, there is partnership."

* * *
The attitude of a widening interfaith of all who worship God has been in large measure predominant also in the Jewish religious participation. There were by 1954 nearly 1500 scout units in Jewish synagogues, the YMHA, and Jewish community centers. These represented only a part of the Jewish boys in Scouting, however. Many Jewish families believe that their boys gain most—and other boys also—through non-sectarian units.*

These views on religion and the boy scout movement are related to policy at the national level. On the local level the Boy Scout movement in Rhode Island started out as predominantly a Protestant dominated organization. Early names—G. Edward Buxton, Jr., Charles E. Mulhearn, T. Dawson Brown, Captain George Bucklin, John R. Rathom—all so-called WASPS (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). During the early years of the movement, Catholics were often discouraged by their church from joining the Boy Scouts. Aaran Roitman tells of a conversation which he had with the late Bishop McVinney who told him that he himself had had to drop out of the Boy Scouts as it was considered a proselytizing Protestant organization by the Catholic Church when he was a young boy. Bishop Keough legitimatized scouting in the 1920s so far as the local Catholic church was concerned.

A Jewish committee on scouting was formed under the leadership of Jacob S. Temkin and Joseph Jacobson, following splendid backing from Rabbis Schussheim, Braude, and Goldman. This growing interest of the religious faiths in Scouting resulted in the dedication in 1948 of tracts of land at Yawgoog for religious use. On three different sites Catholics, Protestants, and Jews have each erected centers for worship—and these three magnificent installations are famous throughout the country." [See photo page 366] * * *

A "Scout is Reverent Sunday" was the theme of the program yesterday at Yawgoog Scout Camps in Rockville. More than 3,000 visitors attended the afternoon services held at the three religious centers. . . . The Temple of the 10 Commandments, the center for scouts of Jewish faith, was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. Jacob S. Temkin, Chairman of the Jewish lay committee on scouting, presided. A new A-type structure now houses the Torah and is situated in a wooded area off the trail to Wincheck Pond. Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen gave the address of the day and led the gathering in the invocation and benediction. Joseph Jacobson,
THREE FAITHS WORSHIP CENTER

CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT and JEWISH STATIONS

a member of the committee on scouting, led the prayer of responsive reading.*

Not only were there separate houses of worship at the camp, but awards were presented by the various faiths for participation and service in religious affairs, knowledge of the beliefs and practices of a boy’s own faith, and effort toward spiritual excellence. The Jewish award is called the Ner Tamid* medal.

Herman Galkin recalled his own boy scout experiences as a young boy and mentioned the short-lived all-Jewish troop formed by Doctor Gomberg. When this troop was disbanded he joined a troop at the First Baptist Meeting House. He has fond memories of that troop and particularly of Albert Thomas, a volunteer leader, who later became the minister of the church. Thomas always caused Galkin to feel proud that he was a Jew. Galkin also joined Troop 6, which met in the Old Arsenal on Benefit Street. Later Galkin volunteered to work with boys at the YMHA and the Hebrew Educational Institute. It was while he was so engaged that he saw the need for an all-Jewish troop and started a group in 1921 at the headquarters of the Hebrew Educational Institute at 65 Benefit Street. “Religion is very much part of scouting. If a boy is a good Jew, the scouts want him to be a good Jew and live up to his religion”, said Galkin.

A record of Galkin’s efforts on behalf of Jewish observances at Camp Yawgoog has been preserved in his collection of letters. J. Harold Williams on June 15, 1923 wrote to Galkin as follows:

Just a line before leaving for camp. Dr. Marvel** and I have been having some serious talks about the matter of serving Kosher fowl and meat at camp and have reached a decision that we do not think it practicable to do it this year. We will of course look after the boys in the matter of serving eggs mornings and such matters which can be easily adjusted.

A letter from Isadore Abelson, Director of Army & Navy Service Department of the Jewish Welfare Board of New York City, dated May 5, 1927 further shows Galkin’s continuing concern with the subject:

Your letter of May 4th requesting us to supply you with Prayer Books for Saturday morning Services held for the Jewish Boy Scouts

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*“Eternal Lamp”. (Hebrew) The ever-burning lamp, suspended in front of the Ark, symbolizing the eternal watchfulness and providence of God over his people.

**Frederick W. Marvel, Professor of Physical Culture at Brown University.
of Rhode Island has been referred to me for reply. Will you kindly let us know how many copies you desire, and if it is possible for us to spare the quantity sought, we shall be glad to do so.

Swartz also commented on Galkin's efforts regarding Boy Scout religious observances:

Mr. Galkin supervises four troops, one of which is composed of Jewish and Gentile Boys (No. 14), because this troop was in existence before Mr. Galkin took charge of it. Another troop, No. 41, is composed of the boys of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, also under Mr. Galkin's supervision. He is strict in the performance of the regular scout duties by his troops, but he is as much insistent that his troop carry out Jewish activities which he outlines for them. Thus it was for the first time in the history of local Scoutdom that his boys at Camp Yawgoog had kosher food, by special arrangement with Scout officials, and also accounts for the fact that his boys 'davened'* each morning and conducted regular services while at camp.

Swartz reported that by arrangement with Joshua Lerner, principal of the Talmud Torah** at the Hebrew Institute, Galkin was planning for Hebrew study classes among the scouts of his troops. Lerner would teach them to read and write Hebrew and also instruct them in Jewish history.

Writing further on the Jewish troop religious observances Swartz reported in his column:

It was on Friday, January 16 (1925) that Troop 10 did a very big thing, for though it was such a stormy night that anyone could be excused from attending a religious service, still as Troop 10 is not made up of weak-hearted Jews, the whole troop attended in a body. Their Jewishness is never dampened by any outside storm—whether it be rain, snow, or unjust criticism hurled at Jews by misguided ignorant people, who are not even aware of the real meaning of their faith. So the storm that swirled around the outside of Temple Beth Israel was more than offset by the fervor of the Boy Scouts as they zealously prayed. It gave all who attended a feeling that the Jewish religion is really an active force for good, for it has not outlived all the storms of pain and persecution. . .

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*Daven, to pray. (Yiddish) Reputedly from the French l'office divin, "divine office."
**Hebrew School.
All Jewish troops observed the Chanukah festival in a fitting manner. A Boy Scout is reverent. He must observe the teaching of religion faithfully. Otherwise, he is not a good scout.

Mr. Galkin’s efforts on behalf of religious observances as documented by Swartz related largely to the 1920 decade. Referring to a somewhat later period, Doctor Melvin Hoffman commented:

There were services all the time at camp. We would on occasion have someone who was strictly kosher, and the camp would make some arrangement. They did it well enough so that is satisfied their parents. It is difficult and does tend to discourage strictly kosher kids from coming down to camp.

When Abbott Lieberman was chairman of the Jewish Committee on Scouting, he recalled, questions would be asked about kosher food. If headquarters were advised in advance, a frozen kosher dinner could be provided. “For breakfast they could manage with bread, butter, cereals—all dairy, but, of course, not on kosher dishes. There have been kids who went to Yawgoog and got along by not eating any meat. So it all depends on how strong the person is who wants to follow it through.”

Lieberman continued:

The conflict in scouting always was the Friday night and Shabbat camping. Some rabbis have said if hiking and cooking are completed before sundown Friday and there is no building of fire on Saturdays, it is all right. But let us not kid ourselves. You cannot take 11 and 12 year old kids and not have them do what everybody else is doing. Jewish scouting is hard if you want to stay completely Orthodox. I remember we had a rabbi come in from New Jersey. He was the rabbi who was head of scouting throughout the country. Jack Temkin had all the rabbis at Turks Head Club. This rabbi tried to instill in the other rabbis a comprehension of what wonderful things the boys could get out of scouting as well as Jewishness. He was able to persuade some of them to permit the boys to go on overnight hikes Friday and Saturday. My own answer to all the rabbis is: “Where can you get closer to God but in the middle of God’s country where you don’t see a light, you don’t see anything but true nature—the sun, the moon, the stars. What is it if it isn’t God itself? God is in the Temple, but he is outside too.”

A difference of opinion exists as to whether to establish and maintain all-Jewish troops which would incorporate religious observance along
with the boy scout activities or to recruit Jewish boys into non-sectarian troops. The present tendency is toward the latter. Various reasons for this view have been offered. There is less interest manifested among the Jewish rabbinate than within the Catholic diocese and among the Protestant ministry. At Camp Yawgoog it is difficult to provide a Jewish service because of lack of someone to officiate, whereas the Catholic mass and Protestant services are well attended and encouraged by their respective churches.

With many Jewish families now settled in Greater Providence, the tendency is for the boys to join troops in their neighborhoods or at their schools. This geographical change has led to a non-sectarian sponsorship of boy scout troops.

At present there is only one Jewish troop active in Providence. It is also the only such troop cited in this article that is still in existence, namely, Troop 20 at Temple Emanuel. Troop 20 is about to celebrate its 50th consecutive year. Doctor Norman Kahn is the current scoutmaster. He believes it to be the only Jewish sponsored troop still operating, not only in Providence, but in the entire state. Troop 50, which became Troop 40, of Temple Beth-El ceased to exist about two years ago. Fred Kelman, the last scoutmaster of Troop 10 of Temple Beth Israel, reports that it too had been phased out about two years ago. These formerly active troops had to be terminated because of lack of leadership and often lack of interest on the part of sponsors or potential sponsors.

THE CUB SCOUT MOVEMENT

A significant development of the 1930s was the initiation by the National Council of the Cub Scout movement for boys aged 9, 10 and 11. Later, when the minimum Boy Scout age was lowered to 11, the Cub Scout starting age was lowered to 8. Newport took to Cub Scouting at once, but in other parts of the state growth was slow. Eventually, this home-centered program became established as an important phase of scouting. Blue and gold uniforms identified the youngsters. Women entered the Scouting program for the first time as Den Mothers. In the early 1920s a number of independent wolf cub units patterned after England’s program had been set up in the United States, but the official Cub Scout program was introduced in 1933.

Herman Galkin not only conceived the idea of a cub scout troop, but he formed such a group for the younger boys in the early 1920s. He expressed his ideas in a letter dated November 14, 1923 to the Executive Board of the Hebrew Educational Institute:
Jews and the Boy Scout Movement in Rhode Island

Due to the fact that there are so many boys under the age of twelve in this neighborhood who are seeking membership in our Scout troop constantly, and whereas a boy must have reached his twelfth birthday in order to become a Scout, this leaves the younger boys to solve their recreation and leisure periods to themselves.

Resulting from the numerous requests made by these boys, we are about to organize a Cub Scout Troop with the aim of giving these boys the correct sort of recreation and education program to keep them interested in Scout work until they are old enough to join our Boy Scout troops. Cub Scouts not being officially recognized by the Boy Scouts of America, I wish to take this opportunity in asking the Executive Board to sanction such an organization, to be run in the Institute. No doubt there will be a little expense attached to this movement as a great many of the boys come from poor families. I feel that this movement will be of great advantage to our community at large, and especially our Talmud Torah as we will recruit many boys from there, which will have a tendency toward making the boys take a more active interest in their studies as they will be barred from all Scout activities if they do not pass in their studies.

On May 22, 1925 Galkin described the Cub Scout Troop he had originated to Emerson Brooke of New York City:

Some two years ago I spoke to our Scout Executive, Mr. Williams, regarding a younger boy program, and he advised me that National Headquarters had a committee investigating the younger boy program. Having waited a considerable length of time, and not receiving a response I proceeded to organize a group of boys which we named Cub Scouts with the understanding that we would carry on with this name until National Headquarters would adopt a younger boy program. In no way whatever have the Cub Scouts been connected with our Scout troops. Their only relationship is that they are allowed the use of the Scout Room and Meeting Hall, and our leader is recruited from our Scout Troops. These boys at present meet Sunday afternoons. They have not used any of the Scout tests whatsoever and they have no uniforms.

Swartz commented on the Cub Scout movement as set up by Herman Galkin:

... it is vitally necessary that boys from 8 to 12 be kept out of mischief in their leisure hours. For many a young lad starts a
life of wrong doing out of his mis-directed thoughts of what fun really is. The Cub Scout idea is to make those young lads good boy scouts and good loyal citizens.

Swartz described the troop as comprising four patrols of ten boys each with names such as Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Harding, which were designed to inculcate in the boys a sense of patriotism.

**EXPLORER UNITS**

As the Boy Scout movement progressed, the need for special programs for other than the younger boys became evident. Programs designed for boys 14 to 17 years of age would be of greater value and interest to them. Originally the Explorers’ program was low-keyed, designed mostly for senior scouts. It was little more than an adventure type of program where junior leaders could have an affiliation, and not always be associated with the younger boys, as Doctor Melvin Hoffman explained the Explorer program.

"Then," continued Doctor Hoffman, "I had an inspiration. Although I found out later that it had been done previously in California, I did not know it at the time. The inspiration was an idea to open doors to high school youngsters that ordinarily would not be open to them. I envisioned it as a career-orientated type of activity. By using some kind of topic in medicine, we would have doctors talk to youngsters about what they do, and be open for questioning and discussion. This would give students a chance to find out about health careers from people involved and to learn more in case they were interested. These youngsters would not ordinarily have had the chance to have contact with these individuals or to see the hospital areas of special activities. They would tour with someone responsible for what went on in that area—as, for example, a demonstration of an x-ray and a discussion about it."

The program which Doctor Hoffman envisioned became a reality in 1961 when he inaugurated it at the Rhode Island Hospital. He was assisted by Robert Hochberg, who served as coordinator of the Explorer program. This program ran for about ten years under Doctor Hoffman's direction. In its 9th year a questionnaire was sent to those Explorers who had been in the program. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain how the Explorer program affected the scouts' further study and careers. These scouts had been involved during their 10th, 11th, and 12th grades of senior high school, with most scouts staying in the program two years, or occasionally three years. "We made no attempt to select who would
go into the program. It was limited only in the number we could encompass, up to 25 at any one time. For seven years we were oversubscribed, but the last few years of the program were not as heavily subscribed”, said Doctor Hoffman. “It was open to anyone interested in a health career in medicine, and by natural selection we seemed to get the better students. Some came, but then dropped out because we were not going to make junior doctors out of them. For some the program did not meet their needs.” As for the results of the survey, Doctor Hoffman found them very gratifying. “We got back some 65 responses, and 22 were either in medical school or planning to continue a medical career. Of all the others who had graduated from the program, all but one had gone on to college, and that scout had gone into the military service. He returned to work at the Rhode Island Hospital as a technician. Of those who went to college about 20 went on to careers in business, music, philosophy, or others.”

Now there are Explorer units in many other fields such as banking, merchandising, and law. Aaron Roitman, who praised the work undertaken in the Explorer program in medicine under Doctor Hoffman, observed, “I think this career idea is a great one if it does no more than to tell a boy that he may be going into a career that is not for him. He may otherwise spend money and years in pursuing a medical career only to find out he is not suited for it.”

**Boy Scout Awards**

Narragansett Council has, from its earliest days, endeavored to maintain high standards of advancement, calling for reviews by Troop Committees before Scouts were granted Second and First Class Rank, reviews by Districts before Scouts were awarded Star and Life Rank, and reviews by a Council Board of Review before the highest rank of Eagle was granted. . . . The first Eagle Scout rank was granted in 1919. . . . In 1936 an Eagle Scout Book of Honor was established and each Eagle Scout has a page in this book. . . . The Eagle Court of Honor convened at the Providence County Court House and at Yawgoog, and a part of the distinguished ceremony was the placing by each boy of his page in the book. The increase of Scout membership and the large number of Eagle candidates to be reviewed caused the Council in 1961 to place the reviews and Courts of Honor in the Districts, bringing together all the Eagles of one year at which each boy is sponsored by some prominent citizen—usually a man with a vocation in which the boy is interested.”
According to Williams's book, *Scout Trail*, all Eagle Scout badges are now presented in the name of Captain George Bucklin (a philanthropist whose bequest to the Boy Scouts of Rhode Island made possible the beautiful Bucklin Memorial Lodge at Camp Yawgoog). There are also two special medals, the Captain George Bucklin "for merit" Medal and the Bucklin Marksmanship Medal.

Abbott Lieberman has commented that the boy of today upon attaining the Eagle Scout rank does not receive the recognition accorded Eagle Scouts in the past. Favorable newspaper publicity had always been given to honor these boys. However, when Lieberman questioned the policy of the newspapers for not affording space to an event that represented a boy's high achievement, he was told that it was "not news enough". Many Jewish boys over the years have attained the rank of Eagle Scout.


Walter Adler, as a board member of the Boy Scouts (title given to such men was "Scouter"), gave volunteer service in his capacity as legal consultant. He also revised the bylaws of the Girl Scouts, which had not been changed in more than thirty years. He arranged for purchase of the land on which the Pulver Lodge is located.

Aaron Roitman, although he had been a member of Troop 10 as a boy, had had little contact with the Boy Scouts as an adult. However, in 1951 he became active again as the father of a scout, a familiar pattern. Roitman's expertise and experience as a successful businessman was very valuable to the Boy Scouts. He was co-chairman with Rudolph F. ("Pete") Haefenreffer III of a project called the "Together Plan" of 1956, involving manufacturers, businesses, unions, and other organizations. They were brought together at a dinner, which resulted in the formation of 50 troops with the backing of union and management. There had been a need for troops in areas of low income. Roitman subsequently became involved in fund raising. He was chairman of the 1960 Golden Jubilee Year of Boy Scouting. Money was raised to refurbish Camp Yawgoog and raise the capacity from 1,000 to 1,200. They raised
funds in excess of their $500,000 goal. In 1962 and 1963 Roitman served as President of the Narragansett Council of Boy Scouts and has continued to advise and serve in the Boy Scout movement.

Abbott Lieberman started his scouting career at Central Baptist Church, but after one year he joined Troop 20, which had been formed at Temple Emanuel. As a member of this troop he advanced through the various grades eventually becoming scoutmaster. Following service in World War II he became a neighborhood commissioner of the East Side of Providence and Fox Point. As neighborhood commissioner it was his role to see that the scoutmasters and headquarters had open lines of communication. He eventually advanced to Assistant District Commissioner, of whom there were four in Providence. Under his jurisdiction were 20 troops, 1 cub pack, and four or five neighborhood commissioners. Lieberman has also served as Chairman of the Jewish Committee on Scouting, which position he assumed after Jacob Temkin’s death. For his extensive work in Scouting, Lieberman received many awards, among them the Shofar award and the Bucklin award. He has two sons who are Eagle Scouts.

Doctor Melvin Hoffman was 13 years old when he joined Troop 50 at Temple Beth-El on Broad Street. He rose through the ranks from patrol leader and senior patrol leader to junior assistant scoutmaster. He entered the military service in World War II and was wounded at Iwo Jima. In 1945 he was made an Eagle Scout by Chief Williams, who said he never before had bestowed this honor on a scout who had received the Purple Heart. Resuming his leadership in scouting after his service, Hoffman became affiliated with the troop at Temple Beth-El, which was now designated as Troop 40. His work with the Explorer units was cited earlier in this paper. Among other valuable contributions which Doctor Hoffman has made to Scouting was the establishment of a model medical setup at Camp Yawgoog, which setup is now in its 15th year. Hoffman remembered that when he was a camper, physician coverage was erratic, by an intern, a resident, or practicing physician who did not cover the entire season. When Hoffman became a camp physician, he made arrangements for a doctor to cover every week during the camp season. Each doctor would spend a week or more with his family in quarters provided for them. Doctor Hoffman still arranges for physician coverage, and he himself covers part of the summer together with his own family. The current medical setup for the approximately 750 campers accommodated comprises one physician, two orderlies, and a nurse. The infirmary, the Armington Memorial Health Lodge contains two treatment rooms and a seven bed ward.
Doctor Hoffman was responsible for organizing a successful two-day conference on camp health based on his camp experiences. It was held in Providence and attracted 90 to 100 camp directors, nurses, physicians, and others associated with summer camping. Doctor Hoffman is on the Board of Directors of the Narragansett Council and is Chairman of Health and Safety for the Narragansett Council.

The late Joseph Pulver had originally been recruited into Scouting by Herman Galkin. Galkin recalls that, when the Board of Directors of the Boy Scouts asked Pulver to serve on the Board, Pulver assured Galkin that this was a duty that he felt obliged to accept. He appreciated greatly what the Scouts and Herman Galkin had done for him. Galkin also recalls giving the boys an assignment to draw pictures of their "dreams for the troop". Pulver drew a sketch of a log cabin. After his death Pulver's family erected a building at the Buck Hill Scout Camp in northern Rhode Island, designated as the Pulver Lodge. Pulver is remembered for many years of selfless devotion to Scouting.

Major General Leonard Holland was introduced to Scouting at Troop 14 at Candace Street School. He became the troop's junior patrol leader and remained active as an adult, serving as Cub Scout leader and also as vice president and director of the Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts of America. General Holland has received the Bucklin Award. For more than seven years he has conducted "School Night for Scouting" at which as many as 3,000 scouts may be recruited. It is an annual affair of the school year at which all schools are open. With the cooperation of parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents the story of the Boy Scout movement is presented. Coordination of personnel and publicity are under the supervision of General Holland. In another capacity, in his role as the Adjutant General of the National Guard he oversees the aid given by the National Guard in the seasonal chore of cleaning and setting up the various camps.

Stanley Turco, like the other recipients of the Silver Beaver award, has given years of service to the Boy Scout movement. He at one time served as scoutmaster of Troop 50 and later was chairman of a committee on publicity for the Boy Scouts. He is in agreement with Abbott Lieberman's contention that the communications media are currently little interested in promoting Scouting. He is at this writing a member of the Board of the Narragansett Council and is chairman of the sustaining family membership program of the Council.

Stanley Brier served as scoutmaster of Troop 40, and then became neighborhood commissioner. From this post he became assistant district
commissioner and then commissioner of all of the city of Providence. At this writing Brier is Assistant Commissioner of the Narragansett Council, which covers all of Rhode Island. He has also received the Bucklin award.

HERMAN S. GALKIN

It is appropriate to single out Herman Galkin who has devoted much of his life since 1910 to the Boy Scout movement. March 18, 1977 was designated Herman S. Galkin Day in a proclamation signed by Governor J. Joseph Garrahy. In part it read:

WHEREAS: Mr. Herman S. Galkin has long been an active member of the Boy Scouts since joining the American Boy Scouts in 1910. Through his many years of dedicated service to Scouting Mr. Galkin has shown his interest in the young people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations;

WHEREAS: He has further shown his confidence in the young people of our state by interesting the Jewish sponsors of Boy Scout troops during the 1920s and by organizing the Scouting body for the boys at the Rhode Island Training School;

WHEREAS: Mr. Galkin has contributed to the enrichment of the Scouting program by serving on the Executive Board as Assistant Council Commissioner and as a Scoutmaster. . . .

In this proclamation were also mentioned Galkin’s work with handicapped children as a member of the Providence Rotary Club.

On the same day Galkin also received the Shofar Award. This read: “WHEREAS: you singularly were responsible for the formation of those troops which were sponsored by Jewish institutions within the Narragansett Council.”

In referring to the honor bestowed upon Galkin the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* of March 19, 1977 reported:

Herman S. Galkin, 80, a leader in Scouting for most of his life last night became the first* Rhode Islander to receive the Shofar award of the National Council, Boy Scouts of America.

About 150 persons attended the ceremony at Temple Sinai marking the annual Scout Sabbath. Governor Garrahy was the main

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*Further investigation proved that Galkin was fourth, not first to receive the Shofar award. As there had been no record at Boy Scout headquarters of previous Shofar awards, the committee arranging for the award did not realize that it had previously been received by Jacob Temkin, Abbott Lieberman, and Howard Snyder.*
speaker. . . . Galkin at one time during the 1920s was scoutmaster of five troops at the same time, and he was responsible for organizing all seven troops in Providence that are sponsored by Jewish organizations.

Regarding Governor Garrahy's reference to Galkin's work in organization of a scout unit for the boys at the Rhode Island Training School, Galkin related in a recent interview: "There were six Jewish boys at Sockanossett (the Rhode Island Training School for Boys). I used to bring them to the area where I later built my home. When I started the Jewish Boy Scouts I noticed no one ever did anything for the Jewish boys at Sockanossett. In those days they did not have social workers, and each little wrong thing a boy would do, it was easier for the teacher to send him down there. The superintendent was a former Boy Scout leader at Camp Yawgoog. What I had in mind was that when these boys at Sockanossett were released, they would have friends on the outside. I used to visit their parents and find out more about them. I became acquainted with the boys at the training school and would take the scouts from my troop with me to help these unfortunate boys and make friends with them." Galkin was allowed to take the boys on camping expeditions. He spoke of how well some of these boys have done with their lives after their release from the Training School.

On September 11, 1923 Galkin received this letter from Chief Scout Executive J. Harold Williams: 'It is with great pleasure that I notify you of your election yesterday by the Executive Committee of the Greater Providence Council as Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner. This title has been given you in order that you may more readily carry on the work of scouting among the Jewish boys of Providence.'

In the 1920s Galkin sent a number of letters to prominent men in the community asking for contributions for the boys of poor families who would be deprived of their week at Camp Yawgoog because of inability to pay the $5 per week board. The responses indicate his considerable success in raising the money. In 1923 the YMHA and YWHA contributed $50 to enable some of the boys who could not afford the fee the opportunity of attending camp. Among the 83 boys who went to Yawgoog that year, 13 were from the Jewish Orphanage.

Herman Galkin not only raised money, but also wrote letters, such as the following dated July 14, 1925:

Dear Parents: No doubt by this time you have consented to let your son go to Camp Yawgoog to mold deeper into the character
of your boy the high ideals of the Scout movement, "Physically Strong, Mentally Awake, and Morally Straight".

We know that many mothers fear to send their boys away where they can go in bathing, but we wish to take this means of assuring you that there is no danger whatever in camp. The boys are well guarded at all times. They are taken in bathing at regular swim periods and at no other times are they permitted to go into the water. They are taught to swim and are protected at all times. In fact, some mothers claim that the boys are taken care of better at camp than they are at home.

While Galkin reassured most mothers that their boys would be safe, there is a story about one boy, later a well-known businessman in the community, whose mother was not convinced. A typical "Jewish Mother," she visited her dear son at Camp Yawgoog. Upon discovering that he was sleeping in a tent, she took him out of camp and brought him home—undoubtedly an exceptional case.

One of Galkin's problems was the recruiting of scout leaders for his troops. Through advertisements he solicited the enlistment of scoutmasters. The following typical news item addressed this problem: "He, as you know, is one of the best loved Jewish men of the city, because of his interest in the Jewish youths. . . . At the present time there are five Jewish troops and there are only one or two leaders for the whole mass of boys. Each troop has between 20 to 40 members, and they must have leaders. You can see that by holding meetings each week Mr. Galkin's spare time is not his own. And then there is the HEI (Hebrew Educational Institute) and the Cub Scout patrol which he has organized to take more of his time. He sends out a request that the older Jewish boys at the age of 21 and over should imbibe some of the Jewish spirit and come to his aid."

Galkin continues to pursue the volunteer work he undertook early in his adult life, currently with handicapped children. While his devotion to teaching and serving the needs of others has benefited many, it obviously has resulted in his being a fulfilled and contented man.

**THEY TOO WERE INVOLVED**

Among the many Jews who were connected with the Boy Scout movement in some capacity, some made outstanding contributions. It is not possible to include everyone who has been involved in or who continues to serve the Boy Scout cause in some way. Those cited in this chapter merely are representative of the much larger number of whom it can be said "They also served".
Doctor Manuel Horwitz, who died in 1973, worked very hard in coordinating Troop 40 at Temple Beth-El. He was recognized as a very devoted scoutmaster and later member of the troop committee. "Manny saw scouting in its broader aspects—its potential as being valuable to young people. He tried very, very hard to reorganize the troop, much harder and for a longer period of time than others felt he should. He had a way of meeting and talking to others, getting them involved, and he was able to get den mothers for the cub pack all of the time. He got cub pack leaders who did a creditable job. What was lacking was the cohesive support of the parents."

"When Temple Beth-El moved over to the East Side,* Doctor Horwitz was appointed institutional representative (that is, key man between the unit and the organization, in this case, Temple Beth-El). He was in this post for about twelve years and involved some very capable men as leaders."

Alden Blackman, who died in 1977, was a third generation boy scout. At the time of his illness, which led to his untimely death, Doctor Blackman was serving as head of the Jewish Committee on Scouting.

Harold Silverman, who dates his first boy scout experience to membership in Troop 2, which was connected with the Sackett Street School, went to Camp Yawgoog as a camper. In 1927 he became a truck driver for the camp serving for two years. Chief Williams sent him to Briarcliff Manor Camp to learn the business end of scouting. This eventually led to his joining the staff at Boy Scout Headquarters. In all Silverman served sixteen years as a camper and staff member. His duties included organizing many of the Catholic and Protestant troops in the 1930s. He also organized troops in the junior high schools, especially in the early years of the junior high school movement. He worked with the school principals and would speak to parents on Parents' Night. Among his duties was the recruitment of personnel to fill scoutmaster vacancies. Silverman served on the professional executive staff of the Boy Scouts from 1931-1941.

Henry Wise was one of the very early Jewish Eagle Scouts. He entered the Scouts in 1919 and joined the First Pawtucket Troop. He became Senior Patrol Leader, a Life Scout and a Star Scout, and a Knight of Yawgoog. He eventually earned his Eagle Scout badge in Cranston's Troop 3.

Mark Hochberg, of more recent history, after becoming an Eagle Scout, joined the Explorer Unit, which Doctor Hoffman established at the Rhode Island Hospital. He became so interested in a medical career

*Its move from Broad Street to Orchard Avenue in Providence.
because of his exposure to this program that he changed his original intention of becoming an engineer. Hochberg received a number of honors in his Boy Scout years. He was awarded on one occasion the title of Rhode Island Scout of the Year and was the first Jewish boy scout to be Explorer Boy Scout of America. He was selected as one of twelve scouts in the United States to represent the twelve regions, in this case the New England area. This nomination led to a meeting with the then President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson. In this role he accepted speaking engagements in which he both promoted scouting and raised money for the cause.

**BOY SCOUTING—WHAT CAN IT MEAN?**

If it is no more than just helping the proverbial old lady across the street, what is it that has attracted so many thousands of boys into the Boy Scout movement? Why have so many adults devoted so much time to volunteer work with the Scouts during the 67 year history of the movement? There are many answers. Three Jewish men who grew up in the scouting movement and who still feel very strongly about their involvement in it provided an insight into what scouting can mean.

Doctor Melvin Hoffman: "If we redefine our character, and it is true that we are the persons we are going to be by the time we are five or six, then obviously scouting would have little influence. We broaden our character, we become more solid individuals, and we take into that the various concepts and precepts that are given to us. I think Scouting does a very positive thing in that. It has a persistent role. I think it teaches good citizenship. I think it teaches moral and upright behavior, and it teaches a youngster to be self-sufficient. It gives him attainable goals that he can reach by himself—that is, something that his parents don't have to do for him. They really have to provide for him the opportunity and support, that's important, but the goals are reachable out of it. For example, studies were done during World War II reflecting on Scouting. I think former boy scouts were found to have received more medals for heroism than people who had not been boy scouts. In the overall picture it is what we learn about human values, interacting with people, and learn about our opportunities to exert leadership—it is something we do carry over. It is a part of our formative years. I think it is very important."

Abbott Lieberman: "Without getting too maudlin, the Boy Scout Oath and the Boy Scout Law are as strong in me as the Ten Commandments. With the Scout Oath and the Scout Law and the Ten Commandments you
have a whole life. And this is everything. You know, we kid about the Scout Law—trustworthy, loyal, helpful—put it down in brass tacks, think about it—it's a way of life. When I went into the army, I went with no fear whatsoever because of my camping experiences, my being with strangers and non-Jews. I was with boys who had no scouting experience, and they were scared."

Aaron Roitman: “And the great thing about scouting, like the song, ‘You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught (to Hate)’—well, some of my friends to this very day are kids whom I met at Yawgoog. Here we were living in the toughest part of South Providence, children of immigrants, and we landed at scouting camp to be greeted by a barrage of apples as a rookie, and we met boys from all walks of life, and we began to feel we were part of the whole community—not just ‘sheenies’, as the Irish used to call us in South Providence. If we are ever going to solve this problem with the blacks, we have to take the kids when they are young enough and integrate them into this society. Scouting is its own melting pot.”

The fundamental purpose of Scouting is “to promote, through organization and cooperation with other agencies, the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scoutercraft, and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance and kindred virtues, using the methods which are now in common use by Boy Scouts—by placing emphasis upon the Scout Oath or Promise and Law for character development, citizenship training and physical fitness.”

The contribution of the Jews of Rhode Island to the Boy Scout movement has over the years been considerable. They along with their fellow scouts of other religious persuasions will most certainly continue actively to pursue the fundamental purposes of Scouting.
NOTES

2See Note 1. Page 16.
6See Note 3. Page 17.
7See Note 3. Page 15.
8Excerpted from publication entitled, Rhode Island Radio. Date unknown. Page 7.
9N. Russell Swartz, Jewish Review, April, 1922.
10See Note 3. Page 60.
11Providence Sunday Journal, September 26, 1920, “Ten Years of Scouting”.
12From interview with Herman Galkin, February 11, 1977.
14See Note 1. Page 17.
15See Note 1. Page 64.
16See Note 1. Page 225.
17See Note 1. Page 227.
18See Note 3. Page 33.
19Providence Sunday Journal, August 1, 1966.
20See Note 3. Page 27.
21See Note 1. Page 171.
22See Note 3. Pages 43 & 44.
23Jewish Review, March 14, 1924.
24Interview with Aaron Roitman, August 15, 1977.
25Interview with Dr. Melvin Hoffman, August 31, 1977.
26Interview with Abbott Lieberman, August 31, 1977.
27See Note 6.
28See Note 27.
29See Note 25.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the office personnel at Boy Scout Headquarters, Broad Street, Providence, R. I. my gratitude for their cooperation.
Walter Adler—Telephone interview, August 20, 1977
Herman Galkin—Interviews on February 11, 1977 and September 3, 1977
Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.—Interview on February 20, 1977
Robert and Gertrude Hochberg—Telephone interviews August 24, 1977 and September 17, 1977
Melvin Hoffman, M.D.—Interview August 3, 1977
Major General Leonard Holland—Telephone interview September 19, 1977
Dr. Norman Kahn—Telephone interview September 25, 1977
Fred Kelman—Telephone interview September 26, 1977
Abbott Lieberman—Interview August 31, 1977
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Aaron Roitman—Interview August 15, 1977
Benton Rosen—Telephone interview August 24, 1977
Harold Silverman—Telephone interview August 24, 1977
Harold Sydney—Interview August 26, 1977
Stanley Turco—Telephone interviews August 20, 1977 and September 24, 1977
CHILDREN, INSTITUTIONS, AND COMMUNITY:
THE JEWISH ORPHANAGE OF RHODE ISLAND, 1909-1942
by SONYA MICHEL

The Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island was founded in 1909, just as the tide of collective wisdom in the field of child welfare was turning away from institutions and toward family care. Philanthropists and professionals alike extolled the virtues of family life, regarding the typical 19th century orphan asylum, with its emphasis on regimentation and utilitarian education, as the antithesis of the type of setting they considered beneficial to children. Instead of removing children from widowed, impoverished, or otherwise distressed parents, they sought to preserve the family through casework and mothers’ aid payments. For full orphans many child welfare experts believed that foster homes, rather than institutions, were better able to provide substitutes for family life.

Jewish agencies on the whole favored the move toward supporting mothers and providing foster care. Large institutions such as the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphanage Society of New York allotted increasing proportions of their funds to family-centered programs and set up special departments to supervise them. Thus the decision of Jewish philanthropists of Providence to establish an orphanage at this time seems at first glance to be somewhat anomalous.

Circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Orphanage can in part explain this decision. Although child welfare experts had been debating the value of institutional care since before the turn of the century, the new wave of opinion was not widely expressed in public until the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children held in January 1909. The Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island had its genesis in the spring of 1908, when members of the South Providence Ladies Aid Society began making plans for “the first Hebrew orphanage . . . in Rhode Island.” Although this group obtained a charter the following September, they never actually opened a facility. Their idea was taken up by several other groups and a number of individuals who opened two small homes, which were finally combined and in July 1909 incorporated as the Jewish Orphanage of Providence.

The men and women who were involved in the founding were non-professional philanthropists—businessmen and housewives, who were responding less to current welfare philosophy than to what they perceived to be the needs of the growing Jewish population of Rhode Island. Supported in part by a grant from the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

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were mainly first-generation East European Jews, who were ambitious to become Americanized and upwardly mobile, but who tended to see charity in traditional terms. In Eastern Europe Jews had developed the *kehilla*, a structure which dealt with welfare and educational matters within their community, apart from government intervention. No doubt the impulse to “take care of their own”—to provide a facility specifically for Jewish orphans—was one of the chief motivations of the founders, since the other institutions in the state at the time were either non-denominalional (the State Home and School), Episcopal (St. Mary's Orphanage), or Catholic (St. Aloysius Orphan Asylum).

Prior to the founding of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island (or JORI, as it came to be called), there is some indication that Jewish groups occasionally made payments to widows with dependent children, but they had not established a systematic program. Nor was state-funded mothers' aid legislation in effect at the time. Institutional, rather than home care was the model immediately available to Jewish philanthropists concerned with the welfare of dependent children. Thus, by the time the White House resolutions recommending family care became widely known, sentiment in the Jewish community of Providence was heavily weighted in favor of an orphanage.

JORI was always privately run and largely funded through its own statewide fundraising efforts. In 1926 it became affiliated with the Providence Community Fund, through which it received a substantial annual sum. In 1936 it also began to receive an annual allocation from the City of Providence. The Home served an average annual population of about 42 children until 1942 when, because of the effects of the federal Aid to Dependent Children program and the “graduation” of a large cohort of residents, only eight children remained. Since it was deemed infeasible to continue operating the Home, they were placed in foster care.

Records of the institution—the minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors and Superintendent's Reports—suggest that, while those responsible for making policy did not always follow current child welfare philosophies to the letter, they did manage to avoid creating most of the conditions experts found objectionable in highly regimented institutions. Moreover, interviews with several former residents of the Home reveal that—for this small sample, at least—JORI provided them with security, warmth, guidance, cultural enrichment, and more. They all stated that they believed the care they received at JORI was equal, if not superior, to what they might have gotten in a foster home.
Thus the Orphanage stands as an exception to the collective wisdom of its day, an uninstitutional institution which provided large groups of children with many of the benefits thought to accrue only from family life. In addition, it provided some which were unique to a group living situation. Its success was due to a combination of factors, both accidental and intentional. JORI was supported by a concerned and generous community. Its size and structure were conducive to creating a non-regimented, flexible routine and environment. The personnel—professional, non-professional, and volunteer—were almost without exception, warm, well-meaning, and understanding of children. But the life of an institution cannot be fully evaluated only from “the top down”—from the point of view of its staff and policy makers; the clients—in this case, the children of JORI—must be considered as well. I shall discuss how all of these factors affected and contributed to the life of the institution.

AN INSTITUTION EMBEDDED IN A COMMUNITY

The Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island was physically, socially, and culturally embedded in the Jewish community of Providence, and it was integrated at many points into the life of the entire city as well. The locations of the facility paralleled the mobility of the Jewish population: after being housed temporarily in South Providence, where many of the East European Jewish immigrants had settled, it was established in 1911 on the East Side of Providence, in a neighborhood favored by Jewish families who could afford to move from the “ghetto.” JORI’s Victorian house at 1213 North Main Street looked like many others in the area. Although it was large, it did not appear forbidding to its young residents, nor did it seem to attract unwanted attention from passersby. The children could play outside in the yard, and apparently there was some interaction with neighborhood children, for one former resident noted that he began a lifelong friendship with a boy who lived next door.

In 1924 JORI moved into new, much roomier quarters several blocks away on Summit Avenue. The new building had been designed and built especially for the Orphanage, and, while it could not be mistaken for a family home, it had the advantages of a modern gymnasium and large playing fields. The recreational facilities became a center for local athletics, with teams from the Home playing basketball and baseball against neighborhood children. Both boys and girls participated, and the games not only broadened their social contacts, but also exposed them to a different set of cultural values, since the population of the immediate neighborhood was largely Italian Catholic. In the ’30s tennis courts were added, built by labor the local WPA provided. A former resident recalls that there
was never any problem over sharing the courts with neighborhood children:

We wouldn't dream of saying, "You get off the courts because we want to use them." You just waited and you took your turn."

Some orphanages, particularly large ones, contain educational facilities on their own premises. While this arrangement protects inmates from being stigmatized as "the children from the home," it has the disadvantage of limiting their social experience. JORI children attended both Providence public schools and the Sunday School conducted by Temple Emanuel, a large Conservative synagogue with a well-to-do congregation. Inmates recall moments of embarrassment, such as when the superintendent of the Orphanage came to consult with their teachers (something most of them did regularly, as part of their concern with education), but they concluded that their awkward status had less to do with the actions and policies of the institution itself than with the response of their peers outside. To mitigate this response most of the superintendents allowed the children to exchange visits with their schoolmates. Outsiders loved to come to the Home, apparently partly out of curiosity or fascination and partly because there was always an enticing bustle of activity in the gym, on the fields, or around the piano. Under at least one superintendent JORI children were also allowed to stay overnight at the homes of their friends and invite them to sleep in the dormitory when space permitted.²

Residents of JORI also had contact with various adults aside from the staff of the Home and their schoolteachers. Members of the Board of Directors and the Ladies Auxiliary were actively involved in daily life. They stopped frequently to look in (a habit superintendents did not regard with hostility, but welcomed and encouraged) and to play with the children. They took them in small groups for outings—picnics, movies, and the like—and also invited them to their own homes.² When the Board assembled for its meeting on the first Sunday of each month, the children often sang or performed skits for them.² Board members attended Bar Mitzvahs and Confirmations and joined the Passover seder which the children themselves conducted annually at the Home.² Former residents do not recall feeling like “charity cases” on these occasions, but rather remember enjoying the attention and affection they received. “I was almost always made to feel that they were proud of me, that I was a good boy,” one man recalled.²

Because the Orphanage was socially embedded in an upwardly mobile community, it enjoyed certain material advantages. To support JORI
financially or sit on its Board apparently carried a good deal of prestige; the annual Thanksgiving Ball to benefit the Orphanage was the event of the Jewish social season. While the minutes of the meetings of the Board are seldom without reference to fund raising problems or new schemes, JORI seems to have attracted its share of charitable donations. It never failed to meet its annual budget, paid off the mortgage on its first building within 11 years, subscribed a $125,000 building fund for the second structure within a year, and raised almost all the money needed for a summer camp within a few months’ time. While the prominent businessmen who sat on the Board were responsible for giving or obtaining many large donations, it was through the steady efforts of the Ladies Auxiliary that the first mortgage was reduced. These women were also responsible for many “extras”—money and materials for special projects, music lessons, parties, trips, clothing, and the like.

Thus, while most public and private institutions of the same period were restricted to austerity budgets, JORI seems to have served as a symbol for the collective pride of the growing Jewish bourgeoisie—and its residents benefited accordingly. Supporters of the Orphanage apparently thought it fit to provide these children with the same advantages they would provide their own offspring. “I was a snob,” one former resident recalled. “I thought the other kids—the ones who lived in families [in the neighborhood]—were underprivileged. They didn’t have tennis courts, or go to summer camp”.

Jewish culture and education were emphasized throughout the history of the Home and served as another link to the community outside. In addition to Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation classes at Temple Emanuel, the boys received weekly Hebrew lessons from instructors who came to JORI. All the children participated in weekly Sabbath rituals, celebrated Hanukkah, and staged Purim plays. For most, these activities seem to have served as a source of identity and pride, a counterpoint to any sense of stigma they may have felt as wards of an orphanage. At the same time, however, the institution did not allow its commitment to Judaism to isolate the children or deprive them of other influences: like many American-Jewish parents, the administrators made their concession to gentile culture by taking the children downtown every Christmas to visit the department-store Santa.

To varying degrees most of the superintendents of JORI recognized the need to bring the children into contact with the life of the community, to expose them to a variety of stimulating experiences—to help them lead “normal” lives. They were sensitive to the social problems of group life and tried to arrange outings so that the children did not have to
travel in large, easily identifiable groups. Lewis Morganstern, for instance, declined an invitation for the children to attend the annual outing of the Providence Chamber of Commerce because “that kind of entertainment . . . tends to expose the children to undesirable or unpleasant publicity." And Maurice Stollerman told the Board he had the children go to the beach in small groups both to insure their safety and so as “not to call attention to themselves.”

It was also Stollerman who instituted the practice of bringing the children downtown to purchase clothes, not only so they could select what they wanted and be fitted properly, but also so that they could have the experience of handling money and making transactions in a store. He wanted to decentralize activities, “seeking in every way to make the Orphanage purely home, with activities outside the home.” He had the boys join an existing Boy Scout troop* instead of starting one just for them and had the girls go to the dancing teacher’s house, instead of having her come to the Home. “It’s quite apparent that with these little techniques we are going to deinstitutionalize and wipe out any remnants of institutionalism,” he said in a report to the Board in 1935.

Stollerman was not the only superintendent who attempted to “deinstitutionalize” the Home, although apparently none of the others made as conscious and concerted an effort. Over the years, however, JORI never developed the structure and routine Erving Goffman identifies with a “total institution.” In Asylums, Goffman describes the social and psychological pathologies which develop in an environment where “all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority.” The simple fact that JORI children attended public school would have prevented the formation of such a pattern. But in addition, the life of the Home permitted the children frequent interaction with outsiders and exposure to a variety of cultural activities and social settings. Thus, instead of isolating its residents from the community, as many institutions tend to do, it created a rich, stimulating environment for them. Since most of the children came from families of extremely limited means and social contacts (some of them were recently arrived immigrants), it is possible that their experience would have been far more limited had they remained at home.

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

While the community stood ready to contribute to JORI, the Home as an institution had to be flexible and permeable enough to admit its
influence. JORI was not, of course, monolithic. Under each of its administrators the philosophy, structure, and routine varied considerably, and, although the last superintendent was far more progressive than the first, the line of development between them was not unidirectional. The superintendents wielded a good deal of power, but they usually discussed major policy decisions with the Board of Directors at monthly meetings. In addition, they shared authority with other members of the staff and with volunteers, so policies, as they finally came down to affect the children, were often considerably mediated.

From 1909 to 1912 the Orphanage was run by two successive matrons. The decision to hire a male superintendent was probably influenced by the superintendent of the Boston Jewish Orphan Asylum, with whom members of the appointments committee of the Board consulted in 1912. Henry Woolf, the first of five superintendents, was hired at a salary of $1200 a year, plus quarters for himself and his family.

With one notable exception, all of the superintendents had had training and previous experience in the field of child welfare. Woolf was himself an alumnus of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Society of New York and took pleasure in comparing his own leniency with the highly regimented order under which he had grown up. Yet, by some standards, the regulations he set down were strict and, despite his disclaimers, bore a striking resemblance to those of the institution he had left behind. He required morning inspection for clean hands and shined shoes and imposed silence at meals. These and several other practices were not abandoned until Maurice Stoller (man came in as superintendent in 1933. Woolf also condoned corporal punishment, ranging from slaps to systematic spankings. One former resident adjudged that, while the punishments might not have been fair, they were at least meted out impartially. Another recalled that, when school report cards were issued, Woolf would read them out before the entire group of children, administering slaps or praise to each child, according to his or her achievement.

Yet those who knew Woolf as a superintendent felt that his warmth, enthusiasm, and understanding offset some of the stringency of his methods. He enjoyed dramatics, working with the children to produce a number of plays. He had them start a vegetable garden and set up woodworking classes for the boys and sewing lessons for the girls. His superintendency was enhanced by the presence of his wife, who, although unpaid, seems to have participated actively in running the Home, tending the children when they were ill and providing much needed emotional nurture for many of the younger children.
The Orphanage records show that Woolf cooperated closely with the Board, seeking its help and advice in many matters. He repeatedly invited Board members to visit the Home, both to inspect his work and offer suggestions and to show their interest in the children.

Woolf died of pneumonia in 1926 and was succeeded first by Lewis Morganstern and then Reuben Koftoff, each of whom served for about a year.49 Because of the short length of their terms, they seem to have left much of the procedure established by Woolf intact. Morganstern was, however, concerned with creating a homey atmosphere for the children (they had by then moved into the new building). "Though this building is beautifully constructed," he told the Board in 1927, "it does not give the atmosphere of home, but rather that of an army barracks." His complaint reached the ears of the Ladies Auxiliary, who provided rugs, lamps, and other comforts.

Doctor L.B. Wolfenson, who took over when Koftoff left in 1929, had a PhD in Semitic languages, but apparently no experience in child welfare. Inmates who "served" under his term recall him as excessively strict and emotionally unavailable.49

In 1933 Maurice Stollerman became Superintendent, bringing with him a series of innovations and changes which reflected the most progressive thinking of the period. He lifted the repressive measures which had survived from Woolf’s tenure and encouraged autonomy by calling meetings of children and helping them set up their own council. To promote consistency among staff attitudes, he included the cook, laundress, and custodial workers as well as boys’ and girls’ supervisors in staff meetings and told them all that their jobs were not to maintain efficiency at the cost of individualism, but to help develop internal controls in each child, “not only for immediate purposes, but for his future conduct and development.”49

Stollerman saw himself as the children’s advocate and intervened with the Board on their behalf. He recommended that guardians be appointed for full orphans, so that they could benefit from individualized attention even if they were too old to be adopted and would remain in the Home until they reached 16. He repeatedly advised the Board to establish systematic policies with regard to the children’s future and set up the practice of planning for each child a year before he or she was to leave. Along with the Board, he would review the child’s records, evaluate his or her potential, and make recommendations accordingly. Whether the child needed funds for college, or a job, or a place to live, he tried to see that they would be provided by the Board or other interested parties.
It was apparent that Stollerman not only had dozens of ideas, but was skillful in generating the enthusiasm and funds to execute them. He brought the notion of a Children's Band to the Ladies Auxiliary, who donated uniforms and instruments. He proposed building a summer camp for the children, a project which one of the Board members took over and completed within a year.

**A Real Home**

In a speech to the annual meeting of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island in 1936, Harold Bucklin, professor of sociology at Brown University, praised the Orphanage for being “a real home, and not just another institution.” He said he was ever impressed that the orphanage had succeeded in avoiding regimentation of the children. That is an achievement in itself. . . . So many of our orphanages have regimented children, made them wear the same dress, and it was this type of orphanage which was criticized at the White House Child Welfare Conference in 1930."

While Bucklin's remarks were based on observations made while JORI was under Stollerman's supervision, it is not unfair to say that, despite the regimen set down by Woolf and perpetuated by his successors, other features of the institution—some quite incidental—mitigated its effect on the children it served.

For example, one of the primary concerns of participants in the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children was the physical structure and child/staff ratio of children’s homes:

So far as it may be found necessary temporarily or permanently to care for certain classes of children in institutions, these institutions should be conducted on the cottage plan, in order that routine and impersonal care may not unduly suppress individuality and initiative. . . . Existing congregate institutions should so classify their inmates and segregate them into groups as to secure as many of the benefits of the cottage system as possible. . . .

Stollerman was the first superintendent to enact such measures consciously by having the girls' dormitory partitioned off to provide small cubicles for the older girls, but the size and structure of both its facilities lent many features of a cottage plan to the JORI plant." The Conference recommended 25 as the ideal number of children in a cottage. JORI served between 35 and 46 children at a time, and they were housed in two dormitories according to sex. In addition to the superintendent and
his wife, the staff also usually included supervisors for both boys and girls, so the ratio of adults to children was equal to or better than that to be found in the typical cottage system, where one housemother and sometimes a cook or housekeeper would be assigned to each unit. Since staff members lived on the premises, they were readily available to the children at all hours. A former boys’ supervisor recalls that his was a 24-hour-a-day job; at least one youngster would often crawl into bed with him for comfort.

Most child care experts also recommend that children be integrated by age and sex, so that family-like conditions can be reproduced within an institution. Although JORI boys and girls slept separately, they ate, played, and worked together. Once girls reached puberty, they were discouraged from participating in sports with the boys, but many apparently sneaked out to the playing fields anyway. The Orphanage accepted children from ages five to 16, and the population was usually distributed fairly evenly by age. As a result, the children often formed sub-family units, with older children acting as surrogate parents to younger ones. One former resident recalls being welcomed by the older girls, who showered her with attention when she entered at the age of seven. Another noted that the older girls provided younger ones with information about menstruation (on the subject of sex hygiene, the institution was notably reticent). This same woman recalled that she enjoyed playing school with the younger children, many of whom she actually taught to read.

In the dining room some of the tables were headed by older children, who were charged with the responsibility of maintaining order and demonstrating table manners. Older children could be depended upon not only to help supervise younger ones, but also to give them some of the attention and affection that they, especially as newcomers, needed. The structure of the Home was flexible enough to allow these relationships to develop, since children of all ages intermixed. Moreover, members of the staff did not see these ties as threats to their own authority.

Because the Home was integrated by age and sex, sibling groups were also able to maintain more contact than they could in institutions where children were rigidly classified, or in a foster care system, where they might have been divided among several families. Although one former resident recalls feeling closer to her peers in the Home than to her own brother, who was several years younger, most sibling groups seem to have preserved and enjoyed their attachments. Applications for admission were often made on behalf of an entire group of siblings, and the Home usually admitted all of them, unless one was too young. In such
cases the younger child would be admitted as soon as he was old enough. In one instance the superintendent made a special effort to locate the brothers of two JORI girls who had repeatedly expressed concern and loneliness for them. The boys were found in an orphanage in New York and, after a good deal of red tape had been cut, happily reunited with their sisters at JORI.

Most JORI children were not, in fact, full orphans, but had one or both parents living, for one reason or another unable or unwilling to care for them. Many parents still wished to maintain close ties with their children, however, and the regulations of the Home permitted them to do so by allowing frequent visits from relatives. In some facilities, parental ties were regarded as disruptive to both child and institutional order and were thus curtailed. The Hebrew Orphanage and Benevolent Society of New York, which permitted only four visits per year, was not atypical. But in keeping with the new emphasis on family bonds, child welfare experts came to recommend that institutions encourage family visits as a way of preserving them. In fact, some authorities believed that institutions were more conducive to fulfilling this function than foster homes, since the relationships institutional staff formed with children resembled parent-child relationships less than those developed between foster parents and children and were therefore less likely to threaten the child's original bond or cause him to feel guilty or ambivalent.

Throughout most of its history JORI did nothing to stand in the way of parent-child relationships. In an exceptional instance a superintendent arbitrarily informed a mother that she could see only two of her four children at once. This woman, a widow who had placed her children in the Home only with great reluctance, never missed a Sunday visiting hour, often trudging miles through the snow when trolley cars failed to run. She refused to accept the superintendent's edict and appealed to a member of the Board, who overrode his decision.

For the most part the Board honored parents' rights to their children, although as years went by they came to feel that their responsibility to each child did not end when he or she left the Home. At first, admissions and discharges seem to have been made largely at the behest of parents or referring agencies, but later members of the admissions committee of the Board undertook to do casework themselves, refusing to discharge children before they had investigated the situation into which they would be released. In many cases it was clear that parents would be financially unable to provide all the material and cultural benefits
available in the Home, but the Board did not regard this as sufficient reason to keep children from their own parents.

Whether it intended to or not, JORI served as an agency for assimilation and upward mobility, particularly for the children who remained in the Home through adolescence. With its emphasis on education and culture, it instilled in many the desire to attend college or professional school, and for some it also provided the financial means to do so. The Board often arranged for business courses or found jobs for those who showed little academic aptitude. Although this might be regarded as a form of "tracking," the Board and superintendent were so well acquainted with all the children that they could accurately appraise their skills and potential and advise them accordingly. While other institutions during this period had also begun to take responsibility for the future lives of their charges (having abandoned the 19th century practice of indenturing or apprenticing them willy-nilly, with no regard for aptitude or desire), what distinguished JORI was the individualized attention its children received. In part this was made possible by their small number, but it was also a product of the community's pride in the institution.

Ironically, but not surprisingly, their experience at JORI sometimes created rifts between children and their own families. According to Myra Tieder, a veteran child welfare worker, this was not unusual among the children of Jewish immigrants, because

the institutional care they received enriched them beyond what most of their families could do for them. The Americanization process taking place in these children created vast differences between them and their parents. The niceties stressed in institutional living were not valued in their homes."

Several former JORI residents recall feelings of disappointment and deprivation when they "graduated" and returned home. "I cried when I left," one woman said. "I didn't want to leave a place where there was no worry about a roof over my head. I knew my mother couldn't afford the cultural things—a piano, piano lessons—that we had in the Home." Another woman also burst into tears when she saw the Brooklyn tenement where she was to live with her mother and sister, both of whom were on relief."

Institutions like JORI were not alone in creating intergenerational conflict; schools, factories, and other social institutions also contributed to this phenomenon. Life in an orphanage did, of course, intensify the differences between parents and child, since it increased his exposure to American
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ideas and ways and drew him more rapidly away from the values and manners of his parents. Mothers' aid programs might have slowed this process by keeping the child in his family, but as long as he attended school and worked outside the home, some cultural erosion was inevitable. Foster homes would of course have a similar effect, the degree depending upon the social status of the foster parents. While JORI may have put distance between parents and children, it also gave them impetus toward upward mobility, something many immigrants sought both for themselves and their children.

In a recent study of life in a large orphanage the sociologist Howard Shuman notes that the institution did not provide children with a substitute home, but a substitute for home. This distinction implies that an orphanage should not be compared only with the family, against which it will always fall short, but evaluated as one of several possible alternatives for rearing, nurturing, and educating children. As one former resident put it, JORI was like a “low-class boarding school.” Indeed, like prep school and college alumni, JORI “graduates” returned to visit year after year. In 1969 over 80 of them gathered for a reunion. Their ties were not only to the institution and its administrators, but to one another.

When the Jewish community of Providence chose to establish its orphanage, contemporary child welfare experts who advocated foster care and family support would very likely have been critical. Yet there is no guarantee that such programs would have been preferable. Foster homes might have been difficult to locate and supervise adequately and would have interfered emotionally with children’s attachments to their own parents. Family support probably never would have been sufficient to enable parents to provide children with the cultural and educational benefits available to them in the Home. In the early part of this century child care experts shared with their non-professional counterparts an unquestioning faith in family life which turned them almost automatically against all types of institutions. Such faith may have blinded them to the values of communal life which, in the proper setting and with the assistance of interested adults and an involved community, children can create for themselves.
NOTES


The first mother's aid law was passed in Rhode Island in 1923. For a discussion of the history of this legislation, see Crepeau, pp. 33-51.

See Bibliography for complete listing of records available.

See Bibliography for listing of former residents interviewed.

Goldowsky, p. 91.

Interview with C.

Ibid.

Interview with George Katz.

Ibid.

Interview with B.

For example, this was true of the State Home and School in Rhode Island, and the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Society in New York.

For a discussion of the problem of using neighborhood facilities, see Howard W. Hopkirk, *Institutions Serving Children* (New York, 1944), pp. 59-62. Hopkirk was executive director of the Child Welfare League in America; his study was commissioned by the Russell Sage Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, the description of the Orphanage here and below is based on archival materials of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island (see Bibliography).

Interview with C.

Interview with B.

Interview with Elizabeth Guny.

Interview with C.

Interviews with B and C.

Interview with C.

Interview with Joseph Galkin.

Interview with B.

Interview with A.

Minutes of the Board of Directors, Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island (hereafter cited as JORI), June 3, 1926.


Ibid.


Goldowsky, p. 98.

Interviews with C and George Katz.
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*See Annual Reports, HBOS, passim.
*Interview with C.
*Interview with B.
*Interviews with B, C, Elizabeth Guny, and Sarah Webber.
*Goldowsky, p. 96.
*Interviews with A, B, and C.
*Superintendent’s Report, JORI, December 6, 1933. For rationale, see Hopkirk, p. 129.
*Providence Journal, February 27, 1936.
*Proceedings of the Conference, loc. cit. (see n.1.), p. 366
*ibid.
*Interview with George Katz.
*See, e.g., Hopkirk, pp. 19, 119. For negative effects of sex and age segregation, see Howard Shuman, Social Structure and Personality Constriction in a Total Institution (unpublished dissertation, Harvard University, 1961).
*Interview with B.
*Interview with A.
*Interview with B.
*ibid.
*ibid.
*Annual Reports, HBOS, passim.
*See Hopkirk, pp. 130-132.
*ibid., p. 134. See also Shuman, p. 100.
*Interview with D.
*Interview with A.
*Interview with B.
*Shuman, p. 96.
*Interview with B.
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Interviews:
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- Elizabeth Gany, volunteer and member of JORI Board of Directors; May 3, 1977.
- George Katz, Boys' Supervisor and Assistant Superintendent, JORI; April 27, 1977.
- Sarah Webber, former probation officer for Jewish children in the State of Rhode Island; April 21, 1977.
- B., female, born 1920; resident of JORI 1924-1936; May 4, 1977.
- C., male, born 1911; resident of JORI 1916-1932; May 3, 1977.
- D., mother of six children, three residents of JORI; May 5, 1977.

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- Rothman, David J. The Discovery of the Asylum (Boston: 1971).

Articles and Papers:
Perhaps no other people in world history has functioned in so many languages as have the Jews. As a result of two thousand years of wandering, Jews have lived among a large number of peoples whose languages they learned; and in at least three instances they not only learned the local language, but also adapted it to their own needs: Aramaic was used from the time of the Babylonian Exile until the Spanish period; the Jews of Iberia spoke and carried Ladino with them to other parts of the Mediterranean world when forced to migrate during the Inquisition; and Yiddish grew out of the languages used in the Rhine Provinces of Germany between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Although stifled in Germany as a result of the Enlightenment and emancipation, Yiddish developed extensively among the large Jewish communities in Austria-Hungary, Poland, and Russia, becoming the language of the largest segment of the Jewish people.

Yiddish-speaking Jews lived in the United States in some numbers throughout the nineteenth century, but it was the large wave of immigrant Jews arriving from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1920 who brought with them the Yiddish that was spoken in the East European ghettos. Yiddish flourished in the United States for a number of decades, reinforced by the flow of immigrants and the settlement of Jews within ghetto-like areas in the New World. The significant reduction in immigration and concomitant reduction in the proportion of foreign-born, the movement away from areas of first settlement, and the increasing Americanization of the Jewish population all point to the virtual disappearance in the United States of Yiddish as a spoken language, except among a small segment of the American-Jewish population.

In this respect the experience of the Jewish community in Rhode Island is quite typical. The 1963 population survey of the Greater Providence Jewish community clearly showed the decline in Yiddish-speaking with distance from the immigrant generation. Whereas two-thirds of the first generation lived in households where Yiddish was spoken, the proportion declined to 36 per cent for the second generation and to 13 per cent among the third generation. The use of Yiddish thus reflects not only the linguistic assimilation of Rhode Island Jewry,
but also the decline in the number of immigrants from the countries of Eastern and Central Europe who settled in the state.

Data from a sample survey can be only suggestive of the changes that have taken place over the course of half a century. A more useful source of information for analyzing the historic trend is the information on mother tongue included in the United States census of 1910 through 1940, and in 1960 and 1970. Care must be exercised in using these data for comparative purposes over time, however, because the census questions and tabulations of the information about mother tongue changed markedly in the course of the 60 years. The censuses of 1910 and 1920 determined the "language of customary speech in the homes of the immigrants prior to immigration" for all white persons who were foreign born or who had one or both parents foreign born. The 1930 and 1960 censuses asked a similar question, but only of persons who were themselves foreign born. In 1940 and 1970, the question was changed to refer to the language spoken in the home in earliest childhood. As a result it was asked of all persons, regardless of generation status. No question on mother tongue was asked in the 1950 census.

The available information thus refers to different segments of the population, depending on the census year. The only data that are comparable for all six censuses are those referring to the foreign born, since language spoken in earliest childhood for the foreign born would be similar to language spoken prior to immigration. The data available for second generation Jews (1920, 1940, and 1970) and for third generation (1940 and 1970) can, however, provide some indication of the extent to which Yiddish continued to be used in the home even after some distance from the immigrant generation.

Just as the various censuses differed with respect to the type of question on mother tongue, so too were there variations in the kinds of tabulations made of the collected data. In these years differing information was available on age, sex, country of birth of the foreign born, or size of place of residence in various combinations. In general the data published for individual states or cities were not extensively cross-tabulated. The censuses of 1920 and 1930 included breakdowns for individual states by sex; and those for 1930, 1940, and 1960 indicate rural-urban status of place of residence. Such a paucity of information seriously limits the amount of systematic analysis that can be undertaken. The only tabulations that are consistently available over the entire 60-year period for Rhode Island are simple counts of the number of foreign born who list Yiddish as their mother tongue.
The data for the United States as a whole have been analyzed by Ira Rosenwaike. He reported in 1971, based on analysis of the available census data, that the number of foreign-born persons in the United States reporting Yiddish as their mother tongue had declined to only 0.5 million by 1960, after rising from 1 million in 1910 to a peak of 1.2 million in 1930. The 1970 census showed a still further decline to 0.4 million. In fact by 1970 the number of foreign born persons reporting Yiddish as their mother tongue was far exceeded by the number of native born, about 1.2 million, and of these just under 1 million (986,000) were children of immigrants and 170,000 were third generation. In 1920, when the census first presented data by age, just over half of the foreign born population reporting Yiddish as their mother tongue were under 35 years old, and only 10 per cent were age 65 and over. By 1960 Rosenwaike reports, only 4 per cent of the foreign born of Yiddish mother tongue were under age 35, and 40 per cent were 65 years and over. This reflects in large measure, of course, the cut-off in immigration and the consequent aging of the foreign born population. By the 1970 census the situation had changed even more; only about 8 per cent of all foreign born with Yiddish as their mother tongue were under 35 years of age, and 60 per cent were 65 and over. Even among the native born persons of foreign parentage in the United States whose mother tongue was Yiddish, there is a clear pattern of decline by age. Only 6 per cent of such persons were under 25 years of age in 1970 in contrast to the 15 per cent aged 65 and over; an additional 57 per cent were between ages 45 and 64. Moreover, it must be reemphasized that these statistics refer to use of Yiddish as a spoken language at home when these individuals were children. Although there is no way of ascertaining from these data the extent of current use (in 1970) of Yiddish, the percentages are undoubtedly well below those cited above. Clearly then, these data point to a very considerable reduction and eventual virtual elimination of Yiddish as a spoken language in the United States.

But interest here focuses not so much on the United States as a whole, for which the situation has been well documented, but on Rhode Island. Consistent with national patterns the number of foreign born Jews in Rhode Island has declined substantially; by 1963, the date of the latest survey, only 17 per cent of the Jewish population were immigrants. About 43 per cent were the children of foreign born or mixed native-foreign born parents. Most striking, and perhaps most significant, 40 per cent of the Rhode Island Jewish population were native born.
Jews of native born parents. Since 1963 this distribution has undoubtedly accentuated despite the influx of a small number of immigrants in recent years. In short, an overwhelming majority of Rhode Island Jews, as of American Jews generally, are American born, and a significant proportion are actually third-generation Americans. In fact, a growing but still small number are fourth generation.

The changing effects of immigration become quite clear when age is related to nativity. In 1963, of the foreign born, almost 85 per cent were 45 years of age and over, and half of this group was at least 65 years old. By contrast, over half of the third generation were under 15 years of age and less than 5 per cent were 45 or over. Relevant, too, for this analysis of Yiddish as a mother tongue is the observation that at least 70 per cent of the foreign born population came from Eastern Europe; this percentage rises to 78 per cent if Austria is included in Eastern Europe, reflecting the fact that many of those saying they were born in Austria probably refer to the Austro-Hungarian Empire that included Galicia. The picture changes very little if the nationality background of the American born Jews is examined. About eight out of every ten had parents or grandparents who were of Eastern European origin, places where Yiddish was the lingua franca of the Jewish population.

Turning to the extent to which Yiddish has actually been the “mother tongue” of Rhode Island Jews and the patterns of change since 1910 shown by the census data, it is important to stress that persons reporting Yiddish as mother tongue do not constitute the total Jewish population, even among the foreign born. Not only did immigrants arrive from countries where Yiddish was not spoken, but a substantial number who did come from Eastern Europe erroneously reported “Russian” in answer to the mother tongue question.

The data for Rhode Island show a steady decline in the number of foreign born persons whose mother tongue was Yiddish. From a high in 1910 of 7,548, their numbers shrank to only 1,443 in 1970. In large measure this change reflects the decreasing levels of foreign born Jews in the Rhode Island population to the low level noted above for 1963. Between 1910 and 1970 the total number of foreign born in Rhode Island also decreased, from 178,025 to only 73,374. Yet, relatively, the decline among the Yiddish speaking was sharper: In 1910 they constituted 4.2 per cent of the total foreign born population in Rhode Island; but by 1970 their proportion was only 2.0 per cent. Thus Rhode Island ceased to attract Yiddish speaking foreign born to a greater extent
than it did other language groups. At the same time the state also experienced a decline in the number of Yiddish speaking who lived here in comparison to the total number in the United States. By 1970 only 0.3 per cent of those foreign born in the United States who indicated Yiddish as their mother tongue lived in Rhode Island, compared to 0.7 per cent in 1910.

The relative decline in the number of foreign born who spoke Yiddish in Rhode Island is also reflected in the prevalence of Yiddish compared to other languages spoken. In 1910 Yiddish ranked third among the languages reported by the foreign born (excluding English), preceded only by Italian and French. Thereafter, Yiddish declined in usage with each successive census, so that by 1930 it ranked fourth and by 1960 sixth. By 1970 it held seventh place; Italian, French, Portuguese, German, Polish, and Spanish were all spoken by larger numbers of foreign born than was Yiddish.

Table 1: FOREIGN BORN PERSONS OF YIDDISH MOTHER TONGUE IN THE TOTAL UNITED STATES AND RHODE ISLAND, AND TOTAL FOREIGN BORN IN RHODE ISLAND, 1910-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Yiddish Mother Tongue U.S.</th>
<th>Total Foreign Born R.I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,051,767</td>
<td>178,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,091,820</td>
<td>173,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,222,658</td>
<td>170,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>924,440</td>
<td>136,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>503,062</td>
<td>85,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>438,116</td>
<td>73,374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R.I. as Percent of Total U.S. Yiddish Mother Tongue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>R.I. Yiddish Mother Tongue as Percent of R.I. Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: PERSONS REPORTING YIDDISH AS MOTHER TONGUE BY NATIVITY STATUS, RHODE ISLAND, 1910, 1920, 1940, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
<th>Second Generation*</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>12,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>12,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>8,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>6,031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes native born persons who had foreign born or mixed parents. It does not include native born persons with native born parents who reported Yiddish as spoken in their homes (240 in 1940 and 743 in 1970).

Although the number of Yiddish-speaking foreign born dropped precipitously during the 60-year period, it is interesting that the number of native born persons of foreign or mixed parentage who reported Yiddish has remained relatively constant. In part this pattern may be the result of the difference in the way the question was phrased from one census to the next. Moreover, neither the indication that Yiddish was spoken in the overseas homes of parents (1910, 1920) nor that Yiddish was spoken in the United States home during earliest childhood (1940, 1970) necessarily means that the individual respondent used Yiddish personally. It does, however, show a certain amount of exposure and, presumably, familiarity with the language.

The data also serve as indicators of the shifting generation status of Rhode Island Jewry. In 1910, 4,466 second generation persons in Rhode Island reported Yiddish, as did 4,588 in 1970. In addition, in 1970, 743 native born persons with native born parents also reported Yiddish as being spoken in their homes during their early years. Thus, whereas in 1910 the Yiddish component of Rhode Island’s population consisted of almost twice as many first generation as second generation Jews, by 1970 the pattern had been dramatically reversed: almost three times as many second generation as first generation persons reported Yiddish.

At all times during the forty years during which census data are available by place of residence (1920-1960), persons in Rhode Island who reported Yiddish were concentrated in Providence. But again, the changing patterns over time of the distribution between the city of Providence on the one hand and the remainder of the state on the other parallel the shifting residence patterns of Rhode Island Jewry as these
were identified by Goldstein and Goldscheider. In 1920 and 1930, 80-85 per cent lived in the city of Providence; this proportion dropped to 72 per cent in 1960, reflecting the exodus of Jews from Providence to the suburbs. In part, of course, the changes in residential distribution of persons with Yiddish as their mother tongue also reflect the changing patterns of age distribution of the Jewish population. The fact that the percentage living in Providence did not decline more results from the disproportional number of older Jews who continued to live in Providence.

The censuses of 1920, 1930, and 1960 also provide information on the residence in selected cities of persons reporting Yiddish as their mother tongue. Since the data for 1920 include both foreign born and second generation persons whereas those for 1930 and 1960 refer only to the foreign born, the three sets of data are not exactly comparable. Nonetheless, they do indicate the shifting importance for Jews of the attractiveness of various cities in the state. In 1920, after Providence, Woonsocket was the most important center of Jewish residence; it encompassed 5.6 per cent of those reporting Yiddish in Rhode Island. Its popularity for Jews dropped rapidly however, to 3.1 per cent in 1930 and to only 1.9 per cent in 1960. Just the opposite pattern characterized the proportion reporting Yiddish who lived in Cranston and Pawtucket, with the former showing an increase from 0.9 to 8.0 per cent during the forty years, and the latter from 2.6 to 9.9 per cent. The growth of these two cities clearly reflects the suburban movement of persons out of Providence. This pattern is further reinforced by the growth of Warwick and West Warwick, which in 1960 together accounted for 2.7 per cent of the Yiddish speaking. Throughout the period the proportion in Newport remained the same at 3.7 per cent. Thus, although Providence declined somewhat in its importance as the city of residence for persons reporting Yiddish, in 1960 as in 1920 these Jews continued to be residentially concentrated in only a few cities in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, the data for 1970 were not tabulated separately by specific cities, so that it is not possible to determine the extent to which the trend toward greater dispersal which was already noted in 1963 has affected this segment of the Jewish population.
Table 3: DISTRIBUTION IN RHODE ISLAND OF PERSONS REPORTING YIDDISH AS MOTHER TONGUE, 1920, 1930, AND 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providence</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranston</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawtucket</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick and West Warwick</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woonsocket</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of State</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per cent</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>12,257</td>
<td>6,377</td>
<td>1,918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The tabulations for 1920 refer to "foreign stock," i.e., foreign born and second generation; those for 1930 and 1960 refer to foreign born only.

2. Not listed separately in 1920 and 1930.

In sum, these census data on the population reporting Yiddish as their mother tongue, despite their limitations, provide some indication of the changing generation status and residential patterns of Rhode Island's Jewry. At the same time they document clearly the decline in Rhode Island, as in the United States as a whole, of Yiddish as a spoken language. Its greatest importance in the daily lives of Jews coincided with the great waves of immigration from Eastern Europe around the turn of the century. With the increasing Americanization and greater residential dispersal of the Jewish population, the use of Yiddish in daily life naturally declined. Given the small influx of new residents who are familiar with Yiddish, its continued use as a spoken language is likely to characterize an ever smaller proportion of the population.
NOTES


BIBLIOGRAPHY


JEWSH SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS IN METROPOLITAN PROVIDENCE—THE FIRST CENTURY

by BERYL SEGAL

In the year 1854 the first minyan* was established in Providence, Rhode Island. This initiated a continuous public service for the Jews of the metropolitan area which has continued uninterrupted to the present time. At the same time instruction of the Jewish children in the faith of their fathers became an integral part of the system.

CONGREGATION OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL AND DAVID

The first Jewish teacher, as far as we know, was Reverend Joseph Raphael Spiro. He appears to have served as shohet (ritual slaughterer of fowl and cattle), mohel (official circumciser of Jewish male infants), hazzan (the cantor, a person who reads the prayer and the Torah wherever ten Jews assemble for worship), and a teacher of little children.

With all of these functions his wages were pitiful, and this is what saved Reverend Spiro from oblivion. In 1855 he addressed a pathetic letter to Rabbi Isaac Leeser, dean of Orthodox rabbis in America, asking for help in finding a better position than the one he had in Providence. He could hardly keep his family alive, he complained. In his letter Spiro listed his qualifications. He could translate the Bible from Hebrew into both German and Portuguese; he was proficient in the Talmud; he was both shohet and mohel, but he had a preference for teaching.

Reverend Spiro was not unique. Before rabbis were available to American congregations then in their infancy, men such as Spiro performed all of these functions, without which a congregation could not exist. They were teachers as well. What was unique about Spiro was his preference for teaching, that he was primarily a teacher.

We have no inkling of his methods or of the content of what he imparted to his pupils. The fact that he had the ability to translate the Bible into German and Portuguese tells us that he taught the traditional subject matter of the heder:** siddur,† Scriptures, and the essence of being a Jew. He had no knowledge of Yiddish and could not translate the Bible into that language, since the congregation consisted largely of Jews from Providence.

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*Minyan. Minimum quorum of the ten adult males required for liturgical purposes. (Hebrew)
**Heder: Elementary religious school. (Hebrew)
†Siddur: Prayer book, contains the entire liturgy used at the synagogue and in the home. (Hebrew)
Jewish Schools and Teachers

Prussia (Germany), England, and Western Europe in general, where Yiddish was not spoken.

There followed a succession of shohim, hazzanim, and teachers, who left no trace of their activities for posterity. From 1871 until 1874, Providence had two Hebrew congregations, Sons of Israel and Sons of David, which in 1874 merged into one congregation, the Sons of Israel and David. The new joint congregation adopted the Moderate Reform ritual of prayer after a visit to Providence in 1877 of two men prominent in American Jewish religious life. Honorable Benjamin F. Peixotto and Doctor S. H. Sonneschein, eminent rabbi of St. Louis, were invited to Providence to address the united congregation, which was struggling for existence. The two visitors recommended that the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David secure a suitable plot of land for a synagogue of its own, and that the synagogue provide a separate room for a school for children, “where in addition to our religion the Hebrew language shall be taught”.

A circular inviting all of the Israelities of Providence to a convention at which Peixotto and Sonneschein spoke was composed by Reverend Myer Noot. We do not know where Noot came from nor when he came to the community, but his name was destined to be closely associated with the early Jewish community.

Reverend Noot, who served as teacher, acting rabbi and rabbi, and dues collector, was also a businessman, dealing in crockery. He organized the Redwood Lodge of Masons, No. 35 A.F. and A.M., and he was the first Master of the Lodge. He delivered a lengthy oration on the “Hebrews of Providence” before the Rhode Island Veteran Citizens Historical Association. In the address he showed himself to be a master speaker and scholar, and in some respects the first historian of Providence “Israelites”.

But here we are interested in Reverend Myer Noot as teacher. The congregation in 1877 was still worshipping in a rented hall in a building at 37 South Main Street. At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the congregation the secretary read a letter from Noot asking permission to use a room adjacent to the synagogue as a school for children. The Board agreed provided that Noot read the Torah* every Sabbath, and provided he would be responsible for any damage the children might do to the place. The Board demonstrated its foresight. At the

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*The law (Hebrew), referring to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Scriptures.
next meeting it was reported that a water faucet was broken by the children in the school, and Noot was obliged to repair it at his own expense.

It thus appears that Meyer Noot was the first teacher in a formal schoolroom setting in Providence. With all of Noot’s prowess in writing and speaking he did not leave for posterity a formal curriculum. Thus we must speculate that he followed traditional Hebrew school routines.

The advice of Peixotto and Sonneschein eventually materialized in 1889 when the congregation purchased land at the corner of Friendship and Foster Streets. Here it built a synagogue with space for a school for children. In 1890, some 36 years after the congregation of the Sons of Israel and David was organized, the first synagogue building in Providence was finally dedicated, in the presence of eminent Rabbi Isaac M. Wise and Rabbi Lasker of Boston. The full story of the dedication ceremonies, as well as a description of the synagogue, its exterior and interior, was printed in the Providence Daily Journal, but not a word about schoolrooms. Only Rabbi Morris Sessler, who was credited with collecting funds from Jews and Christians alike, mentions a Sunday School. He invited any who were interested to enter the doors of the synagogue and to listen to its teaching both from the pulpit and in the Sunday School.

Doctor David Blaustein, rabbi of the congregation from 1892 to 1898, directed a school in the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David consisting of six classes. For the first time we have an account of the subjects taught. They were Hebrew language, Biblical History, Religion, and Bible Ethics. The teachers were, besides the rabbi, Gertrude Lederer, Hedwig W. (Hattie) Lederer, Mattie J. Pincus, Relia Goldsmith, and a physician-teacher, Doctor Max B. Gomberg. The post-confirmation class undertook the formation of a library.

So far the story of the Jewish community of Providence has been concerned with immigrants from Germany and Western Europe, and the transformation of their ritual from Orthodox to Moderate Reform. But soon the Moderate Reform residents were joined by immigrants from Eastern Europe, who came in large numbers and settled in the North End of Providence.
Jewish Schools and Teachers

FREE HEBREW SCHOOL

They formed an Orthodox minyan, the Sons of Zion, in 1875. Eventually they built a *shul* of their own on Orms Street, opened in 1892. Simultaneously they provided rooms for a Talmud Torah, a Hebrew School. But the true Talmud Torah did not find favor in the eyes of some of the members. In Eastern Europe that name was reserved for a community-sponsored school for children of the poor who could pay no tuition. To remove that stigma the school was called the Free Hebrew School. The director of the school was George Brauer, and the principal teacher was James Rose, known for his great scholarship and for innovations in the field of Jewish education. He was credited with being the originator of the Free School as well as with the novel idea of admitting girls to the school. In general the Free School was conducted on the principles of the public school system. The subjects taught were: Hebrew Language, Jewish History, and Jewish Religion, including celebration of holidays.*

The Free School prided itself on abolishing Yiddish altogether as the means of translating the Hebrew texts and certainly as a language of instruction, in spite of the fact that the pupils came from homes where Yiddish was the mother tongue.

The Free School held public examinations twice a year, and many people considered this an event in the life of the North End. It should be noted that the *Organ*, a periodical published in the community by the Reform synagogue, praised the Free School and its achievements. Rabbi David Blaustein of the Reform synagogue together with Rabbi Nathan Yehudah Leib Rabinowitz of Sons of Zion served on the examination committee.

We find no records of the progress of the Free School nor why it disappeared from the scene in Providence. But at the turn of the century new teachers came to Bnai Zion (Sons of Zion). Hyman (Hayim) B. Lasker and Mayer Gereboff and a large committee of North End *balebatim**, among whom was Reverend David Orliansky, a giant among scholars of his day, formed the Talmud Torah on Orms Street.

For thirty years Charles Lasker taught in the school. The name Talmud Torah apparently did not bother him, and that name was honorably applied to the school, where at one time there were over three hundred

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*Shul, synagogue. (Yiddish)

**Balebatim, persons of high standing in the community. (Hebrew)
pupils, attending six times a week. He was known as a disciplinarian in the classic sense of the word. He did not put the fear of the Almighty into his charges, but attracted them to study through stories of great men in Israel and holding them up as models of modesty, fortitude, and thirst for knowledge, virtues which he tried to instill.

The Talmud Torah taught the pupils Hebrew, *Tanach*, the name for the three parts of Scripture (Torah, Prophets, and Holy Writings),* and Talmud for the older students. Yiddishkeit ** was the key word in the Talmud Torah, and Yiddish was the means by which he made the Hebrew subjects understood, because Yiddish was still the language of the home in those days (1900 to 1940).

**CHESTER AVENUE TALMUD TORAH**

South Providence never had strong congregational schools, though it had four *shulen*, three on Willard Avenue and one on Robinson Street, only a stone's throw away from Willard Avenue, which was the main street of the neighborhood. But the neighborhood had a Talmud Torah on Chester Avenue, separate and apart from the *shulen*.

The trademark of the Chester Avenue school was Zionism. In contrast to the North End Talmud Torah, where the children were imbued with a love of Zion through stories of great men in Israel who walked the streets of Jerusalem, the Chester Avenue Talmud Torah tried to endear Zion through the writings of men like Judah Halevi, Chaim Nachman Bialik, Achad ha Am‡, and other luminaries in Jewish literature. The school prided itself on being a "modern" school and dwelled on Hebrew grammar and Jewish history. Bat Mitzvah was unheard of, and Bar Mitzvah was taught by special melamdim.††

The teachers changed too often, and unlike the North End Talmud Torah, it did not leave a lasting impression on the pupils. The North End Talmud Torah overshadowed the South Providence school.

**TEMPLE BETH-EL**

Rabbi William G. Braude came to Providence in 1932. As spiritual leader of Temple Beth-El (Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David) on Broad Street, he set two goals for himself: to establish a school for chil-

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*Hagiographa.
**Literally "Jewishness". In this context "the use of Yiddish".
†Pseudonym of Asher Ginzberg, meaning "one of the people".
‡*Bat Mitzvah*, the equivalent of *Bar Mitzvah* for girls. (Hebrew)
††Melamdn, teachers. (Hebrew)
The school was fortunate in acquiring as director Rabbi Mordecai Soloff, the author of many textbooks on Jewish history that are still being used in many schools in America.

After him came Rabbi Albert T. Bilgray, Beryl Segal, and Miriam Makiri, who developed the week-day Hebrew School, which operated in addition to the Sunday School and in which none but trained teachers with degrees in Education could teach.

**TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL**

The first Conservative synagogue in Providence with a school for children was Temple Beth Israel on Niagara Street, organized in 1921. It was fortunate to obtain a graduate of the David Yellin Teachers Seminary in Jerusalem. The graduating class of that year was sent to America to do “missionary work” among American Jews. Morris W. Shoham was sent to Providence. He remained there and in Woonsocket for 30 years, until he went back to Israel.

Temple Beth Israel had a school of about two hundred pupils learning modern Hebrew from an Israeli teacher. After Shoham came many distinguished teachers such as Seymour Krieger, Fania Gross, and Isaac Klausner, who still teaches there.

**TEMPLE EMANUEL**

Temple Emanuel, the second Conservative congregation in Providence incorporated in 1924, opened its doors in 1927 on the East Side. That year its religious school was opened. It was the objective of Rabbi Israel M. Goldman that it would be neither like the old fashioned Orthodox schools, nor the current one-day-a-week of the Reform Sunday School. The school immediately adopted the three-times-a-week program and was dedicated to utilizing textbooks and methods in keeping with the principles of Progressive Education.

Applying modern methods of Progressive Education together with deep-rooted traditional Jewish living were two teachers, husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Klein. They were both graduates of the Teachers College of the Rabbinical Seminary in New York, where teaching was a calling. They were teaching at Temple Emanuel when the
Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Providence was established in 1953. They are still active in the educational field. Other teachers of note who are still with Temple Emanuel are Lea Eliash and Fania Gross. Both of them brought traditions from East European modern schools.

Sons of Abraham

The last Orthodox shul to open in South Providence was Sons of Abraham on Prairie Avenue. Rabbi Abraham Chill was deeply concerned with the school. He personally taught the older classes and supervised the younger children. He and Chaya Segal, who is now teaching at the Beth-El school, fostered a generation of South Providence youngsters who have tender memories of the school. The atmosphere in the school was as important as the subjects they taught.

The shul was abandoned after a change in the neighborhood. Rabbi Chill retired to Israel, while Chaya Segal transferred her teaching activities to Congregation Ohave Shalom in Pawtucket, which had an excellent school. It was housed in an adjacent building, a luxury few schools enjoyed. The school attained its height during the tutelage of George Marcus, who is now at Camp Tel Noar in nearby Connecticut, and Chaya Segal. The school was no longer in existence when the Bureau of Jewish Education came to Rhode Island.

Other Schools

South Providence pioneered in forming many institutions in the community. What was begun in South Providence often became established in the North End and the East Side. Such was the case with the Hebrew Day School in Providence. The first parochial school was opened as the Chester Avenue Talmud Torah in South Providence by Rabbi Joshua Werner. Two posters describing the school are in existence. One announced the opening of the school and begins with a Mazel Tov* to the Jews of Providence on the opening of an all-day Hebrew school in their midst. That was in July 1939. In January 1940 the community was invited to attend a mass meeting at the Bnai Yaacov (Sons of Jacob) shul on Douglas Avenue in the North End, at which the financial situation of the parochial school was to be discussed. The school is no longer in existence.

In 1945 two brothers, Rabbis David and Joshua Werner, one in the North End and the other in South Providence, announced the opening of a modern general and Hebrew day school. The name of the school

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*Mazel Tov, good luck. (Hebrew)
Jewish Schools and Teachers

was to be Yeshiva Achei Temimim (Academy of Brothers Who Strive for Perfection), with teachers to come from New York. The school was to be housed in the Talmud Torah Building at the Bnai Zion shul on Orms Street, the same place where a glorious chapter in Jewish education had been written in earlier days.

The Yeshiva Achei Temimim was known, however, in the community as the Lubavitcher Yeshiva with emphasis on the strict observance of dinim (precepts). Examination of tzitzit (fringes)* and broches** for every occasion was more important than studying.

Not all parents were prepared for such a yeshiva, following the Lubavitcher Hasidic*** way of instruction, and the Achei Temimim closed its doors in 1946.

Still another group sought to open a day school using the name of Judah Touro, to be housed in the Community Center building. Very little is known about this enterprise. It appears to have closed as suddenly as it began.

The parents of the children who separated from the Lubavitcher Yeshiva founded their own school, adopting the program of Torah Umesorah.† They bought a building on Waterman Street and engaged as Rosh Yeshiva † Rabbi James I. Gordon, a graduate of the Yeshiva University of New York, an excellent educator. The Yeshiva is still in existence under the direction of Rabbi Nachman Cohen in a modern school building at 450 Elmgrove Avenue, now the Providence Hebrew Day School chartered in 1946. Instrumental in opening the Hebrew Day School on Waterman Street were Isaiah and Anna Segal, Louis Korn, and the late Archie Smith.

WORKMEN’S CIRCLE

In the 1920s the Workmen’s Circle opened Yiddish schools in many cities in America. The Providence school was opened in 1924 at the Workmen’s Circle Lyceum on Benefit Street. While the schools were not anti-religion, they did not include religious subjects in their curricula.

*Tsitzit, fringes at the corners of the prayer shawl, meant as reminders of one’s duties to the laws of Judaism. (Hebrew)

**Broches, blessings recited on various occasions. (Hebrew)

***The Lubavitcher Hasids were a very pious sect of Orthodox Jews, named after a Russian town which was the seat of its leaders. They are now centered in New York in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

†The National Society for Hebrew Day Schools. The Providence Hebrew Day School is a constituent member.

†Rosh Yeshiva, head of the academy. (Hebrew)
The subject matter was uniform in all of the schools. Yiddish was the basic language of instruction. Yiddish literature and the classic Yiddish writers were as familiar to the pupils as their own names. Jewish history was taught in the light of modern interpretations, and God had no place in the shaping of history. It was a naturalistic approach to the past and present in Jewish life. Music and dance were integral parts of the school curriculum, as were creative drama and recitations. Labor and the struggle of working men and women for their rights were espoused by the children as they were by the parents who were all members of the Workmen's Circle, a fraternal order which served as the Red Cross of the laboring classes. These were the days of Eugene V. Debs, Morris Hillquit, Meyer London, and Norman Thomas. Their pictures were all displayed on the walls of the school rooms, as they were indeed on the walls of the meeting rooms and halls of the Lyceum.

There were in fact two branches, one on Benefit Street and one on Willard Avenue in South Providence. The teachers were Rose Ash of New York and Beryl Segal. The war years played havoc with the Workmen's Circle and with the schools. In the 1940s the school closed its doors in Providence.

The Congregation of Ahavath Sholoam on Howell Street, now completely erased for the University Heights development complex, had an Orthodox school with the usual subjects of a religious curriculum. The school attained its height during the years when Mark Hanopolsky, now deceased, was director-teacher.

Woonsocket, though a community small in numbers, nevertheless had a school worthy of a larger city. Charles Miller was a teacher in the fullest sense of the word. Cut off from associations with other teachers, he had to devise methods of his own. He of all teachers insisted on *Ivrit* as the natural method was called. He was a disciple of Ben Yehudah, speaking only Hebrew. When Miller became ill Woonsocket brought Morris Shoham from Providence to take his place, and thus the school once again was in good hands.

**HEBREW EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE**

The Hebrew Educational Institute, the forerunner of the Jewish Community Center, operated an Orthodox school unaffiliated with any congregation. Rebecca Miller and Abraham I. Shoham were the teachers in

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*Ivrit, the Hebrew language. (Hebrew)*

**Eliyzer Ben Yahudah (1858-1922), father of the modern Hebrew language.**
this five-times-a-week school. With the passing of the Institute and the rise of the Community Center the school was reduced to a Sunday school.

Temple Beth Sholom, at the corner of Rochambeau Avenue and Camp Street, was an offshoot of the old Ahavath Sholom. The new synagogue had a school building that might have been the envy of many a school. It had a succession of teachers, but the school had to close because of insufficient children.

On Sunday, June 20, 1920 the citizens of Phenix and Arctic, Rhode Island were witnesses of an unusual parade. A procession of Jews marched from the town of Phenix through Arctic, carrying a Sefer Torah to be installed in the synagogue and Talmud Torah just founded, the congregation to be named Ahavath Shalom (Lovers of Peace). Rabbis and Cantors from Providence participated. Cantor Smith and his choir from the Bnai Zion shul, Cantor Keller from the Robinson Street shul, and a band of musicians from Boston provided the music. This was duly advertised in a handbill printed in Yiddish and English inviting one and all to join the festivities.*

This was the picture of Jewish Education until mid-century. Though the schools pursued the same goals, there was little coordination among them.

With the advent of the Bureau of Jewish Education an effort was made to unify them and to give them a sense that they were not alone. The community now watches over them and is ready to help them solve their problems.

NOTES

"Ibid.
"Ibid.
*Ibid.
"Ibid.
*Ibid.
*Documentation of much of the information is difficult to come by. Many of the facts herein have been obtained by the writer through personal communication from individuals who attended these schools or remember them.

*For more on this synagogue see page 410. As noted in a footnote to Mrs. Twersky's paper, it was known locally by its Yiddish designation Avas Sholom. Ed.
THE FOUNDING OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY
THE EARLY YEARS OF CONGREGATION
AHAVATH SHALOM OF WEST WARWICK,
RHODE ISLAND

by REBECCA TWERSKY

In the course of my research, I thought that my translation into
English of the original Yiddish minutes of the Ahavath Shalom Con-
gregation of West Warwick, Rhode Island should serve an historical
and educational purpose. The story they record bears witness to the
Jews' loyalty to our traditional roots and determination to pass on this
heritage to their children, uniting them wherever they may live, even
if their numbers are small. These minutes recorded from September
1, 1919 to July 25, 1923 were carefully preserved in a ledger by the late
Mrs. Abraham (Minnie) Sternbach of Phenix, West Warwick, Rhode
Island, the wife of the first vice president of the congregation and an
officer of the Hebrew Ladies Auxiliary. Their son, Professor Harold
Sternbach, brought the Yiddish minutes to my attention.

The original Yiddish minutes and the English translation will go
into the Archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

On December 17, 1919 the Anshei Shalom (Men of Peace) Congre-
gation, was incorporated under the name of Ahavath Shalom (Lovers
of Peace) Congregation of West Warwick, Rhode Island by a charter
granted by the Secretary of State.* The seven founding members were:
Barney Hirshfield, Abraham Sternbach, Morris Shafrin, Joseph Dress-
ler, Harry Fishtein, David Frank, and one Glantz.**

Abraham Sternbach, the only living founder of the Ahavath Shalom
Congregation, relates that there was talk of even earlier settlers in
West Warwick before 1919 (possibly late 1800s or early 1900s). He re-
members a man by the name of (Myer) Shapiro, who had a clothing
store; and his uncle David Frank, a businessman, was among the very
early settlers, having arrived in 1904.

In 1912 Abraham Sternbach came to Arctic, Rhode Island, then a
part of Warwick, Rhode Island and the eventual home of Ahavath
Shalom Congregation.West Warwick was separated from Warwick and

*The charter was granted to "Congregation Harvas Sholam [sic] of Arctic, Rhode
Island"—"To hold religious, educational, social, musical gatherings and meetings,
fairs and bazaars." In the handbill reproduced here it is rendered "Avas Sholom"
For more on Congregation Ahavath Shalom see RIJHN 5:178, Nov., 1968. Ed.
**Not listed among the incorporators.
Abraham Sternbach, the only surviving founder of the Synagogue and First Vice President of the Congregation. *Photo courtesy Max Margolis.*
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes

chartered as a town in 1913. There were about ten to twelve Jewish families with about fourteen to sixteen Jewish children altogether. Some had small stores such as dry goods and shoe stores, but most were peddlers in the various neighboring communities such as Natick, Riverpoint, Clyde, Phenix, Arctic, Centerville, Crompton, and Anthony. The mills and the villages of Arctic and Phenix attracted the early settlers, immigrant European Jews, who came to West Warwick from New York’s Lower East Side. All shopping for kosher meat and food was done once a week on Willard Avenue in Providence, Rhode Island by streetcar. As there was no *shul* (synagogue) in town, the daily minyan (ten adult males, the minimum for communal prayer) was held at the home of Abraham Sternbach, where they also gathered on *Shabbat* (the sabbath) and festivals for prayers until the year 1919. A Sefer Torah* was loaned to them by the Robinson Street Shul of Providence.

The Jewish families of West Warwick longed for a *shul*, a religious and educational center. They organized themselves into the “Anshei Shalom, Anshei Arctic Association”. Led by their president, Barney Hirshfield, and vice president, Abraham Sternbach, they decided to buy a building in the center of town and turn it into a *shul*. On October 20, 1919 Glantz, David Frank, and Max London were authorized to buy a house. The eighteen members made immediate payments of 10 per cent of the cost, a total of $800 in cash. They agreed that in two weeks another half of the money would be paid. A first mortgage was obtained on the house, a two-story wooden structure. The first floor, a saloon, was converted into a prayer house, while the second floor became living quarters for the Hebrew teacher, who conducted services and taught the children of the members. Was he a rabbi? No, none of the men who lived over the *shul* were rabbis, just learned men. “They could not afford a ‘real’ rabbi”, Sternbach told me.

The Anshei Shalom (Men of Peace) Association now, significantly, became “Congregation Ahavath Shalom” (Lovers of Peace) of West Warwick, Rhode Island. With peace among the members and differences forgotten, the president obtained a charter for the synagogue, and a seal was designed for the congregation. Each member paid one dollar a month in dues, and an initial two dollar fee for members from outside of Arctic, West Warwick. Following tradition, the mitzvah (pious deed) of Bikkur-Holim (visiting of the sick) was emphasized. As the minutes record, it was agreed “that when one of the brothers of

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*Sefer Torah, scroll containing the Five Books of Moses. (Hebrew)*
the congregation gets sick, the secretary has to be notified, and he is to send out postcards to go and visit the sick brother”.

In 1915 Shlomo Shafrin had come to teach the children Hebrew and religious studies at their homes. He was now to begin teaching at the synagogue. The neighboring Jews of Warwick and East Greenwich were invited to send their children to study at their new school for a fee. Thus a Talmud Torah [Teaching-Learning of the Torah] (Hebrew Religious School) was founded. The Jews of Arctic understood their sacred and unlimited duty. “Thou Shalt Teach Them Diligently.”

This small and dedicated group achieved their goal. The new Synagogue and Talmud Torah were completed. A Sefer Torah was donated by David Frank, and preparations were made for the Siyum ha-Sefer (the completion of any of the Five Books of the Torah) and the opening of the Shul on June 6, 1920. (See illustration on back cover.)

The Yiddish invitation printed by the Eagle Printing Company, 142 Willard Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island, epitomizes the feeling of pride and rejoicing of the community on this historic occasion: The Jewish community of Arctic and Phenix, Rhode Island realized that to keep up Judaism, with the children to be reared in a Jewish atmosphere, the Jewish sacred institution (the synagogue) must exist.

The Providence rabbis; Cantor Smith with his choir of the B’nai Zion Shul, Providence; Cantor Keller of the Robinson Street Shul, Providence; and a band of music from Boston were on hand for the opening festivities. “As we, the congregation of Arctic and Phenix, West Warwick, Rhode Island, have always taken part in all the Providence Jewish institutions, so we now request that the Providence Jews should take part in this great, holy festivity of the Arctic and Phenix Jewish Community. The following institutions have accepted our invitations: The Providence Hebrew Beneficial Association, and the Providence Beneficial Association. Whoever will come will enjoy and have the best and holiest pleasure.”

At one point in the procession, the men, women and children, rabbis and cantors, stopped at a hall in Phenix and the scribe Gabriowatz inscribed in the parchment Scrolls of the Torah the names of those who wished to be remembered as the founders of Congregation Ahavath Shalom. With the Torah Scrolls borne at the head of the parade, they walked proudly with the marching band to the new shul in Arctic,
The Foundation Of A Jewish Community

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ARCTIC, R. I. and PHENIX, R. I. takes deep pleasure in inviting ALL their Brethren to the opening of their New Synagogue "AVAS SHULOM", and to their "SIYOIM-AA-SAIFOR", which will take place on SUNDAY, JUNE 6th, 1920.

This small community has worked hard and everyone of its members has spent beyond his means to make this Synagogue a Reality, and Now that we have succeeded we want our Providence Brethren to Help us make Merry on our opening day.

To make this day a Real Festival, the Rabbis of Providence, Cantor SMITH with his Choir and Cantor KELLER have been invited and a Real Band of Music from Boston has been hired to furnish the music for the occasion.

The following institutions have accepted our invitations, we feel sure that many others will follow: Shorty: Providence Hefrehw Beneficial Association, and Providence Beneficial Association.

THIS IS THE PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

11 A.M. "SIYOIM-AA-SAIFOR" will take place at the home of Mr. David Frank, Phenix, R. I.
2 P.M. Street Parade from Phenix, R. I. to Our New Synagogue in Arctic, R. I.
7 P.M. Reception at Denommes' Hall, Arctic, R. I.

EVERYBODY IS INVITED AND A REAL GOOD TIME IS PROMISED TO ALL.

THE COMMITTEE

EAGLE PRINTING COMPANY. 142 WILLARD AVE. PROVIDENCE.

This handbill was preserved in the ledger book containing the minutes of the Synagogue handwritten in Yiddish.
West Warwick, Rhode Island. The key, which had been carried on a velvet pillow by Abraham Sternbach's young son, unlocked the door of the synagogue.* Within the sanctuary the congregation stood as the Parocheth (veil) in front of the Aron-Kodesh (Holy Ark) was drawn back to allow the Torah Scrolls to be gently placed within the Ark.

The spirit and steadfast faith of these Jewish men and women can best be described in the words of Isaiah, 43, 10:

You are My witnesses, saith the Lord,
And My servant whom I have chosen.

Each Jew and Jewess is continually making his or her mark upon the unfinished history of the Jews, the history which Johann Gottfried, the great German philosopher, called the greatest poem of all time.

Today the Ahavath Shalom Shul still stands, its physical structure embellished and more beautiful. The building was remodeled in the middle 1930s, better to suit the times and the increased affluence of the members. The renovation was completed in 1938, and on June 7, 1939 Joseph Dressler donated a Sefer Torah on the occasion of its dedication.

The Aron-Kodesh, the Ark which contains the three Scrolls, occupies the entire wall directly in front of the Bimah.** It is recessed and constructed entirely of mahogany. Over the sliding doors housing the Torah Scrolls is carved the Decalogue. The doors are draped with satin embroideries. Above the enclosure of the Scrolls is an intricately carved Eternal Light.† The table for the reading of the Torah is covered by an embroidered velvet cloth, and the light of a beautiful crystal chandelier hanging over the Bimah illuminates the Sanctuary.

In the shul, on the wall of the meeting hall, hang pictures of three young men who died during World War II in the service of their country: Morris Miller, Marvin Sternbach,‡ and Harry Berman.

On May 13, 1945 a meeting was called by President William Deitch to advise the members present that he and Abraham Sternbach had purchased a cemetery plot consisting of forty graves in Lincoln Park Cemetery in Warwick, Rhode Island. All members were to pay their

*As told to me by Marvin Futtersak from the recollections of his grandfather, Abraham Sternbach.

**Bimah, raised platform containing the reading desk.

†Designed and crafted by David Futtersak, son-in-law of Abraham Sternbach and the late Minnie Sternbach.

‡Son of Abraham Sternbach and the late Mrs. Minnie Sternbach.
Ahavath Shalom Synagogue in Arctic, Rhode Island as it appears today. Photo courtesy Professor Harold Sternbach.

Sanctuary of Synagogue. Photo courtesy Max Margolis.
Close-up view of reading desk and Ark curtain. *Photo courtesy Max Margolis.*
share of the cost, and each member and his family were entitled to use the cemetery as needed.

On July 21, 1976 Max Margolis, the present president, graciously consented to show me the synagogue. On entering I remarked how bright and clean and beautiful it was. My host enthusiastically agreed: "Now I don't know how it's possible for an interior of a building to remain as nice as this has been without having redone it. There are no cracks anywhere around, from the settling and everything else, from the beginning. Nobody did a thing to the inside since we started [its remodelling in 1938]. There is no other way but that G-d is taking care of it because we don't have the time to do it. Look at this, it looks like it was put up last week."

Only a few remain in West Warwick today. The original members have passed away, and their children have moved on. But the small remnant together with their old patriarch, Abraham Sternbach, and a few of those who have left still come back to form a minyan for the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayers. Then, the sound of the

Max Margolis, present President of the Congregation, and Abraham Sternbach. *Photo courtesy Max Margolis.*
shofar (ram’s horn) and voices chanting the traditional sad but beautiful age-old nigunim (melodies) are heard echoing through the stained glass windows of the historic Ahavath Shalom Shul.

The following excerpt from Ps. 90, which Moses composed on the occasion of the completion of the Tabernacle, serves to emphasize the importance of the task achieved by this small group of Jews in the beginning of the 20th century:

Establish Thou also upon us the work of our hands;
yea the work of our hands establish Thou.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many thanks to my daughter Rickel for her editorial suggestions. My sincere appreciation and thanks to Professor Harold Sternbach, who showed me the minutes preserved by his family, and for his encouragement; also to Max Margolis, the present president of the synagogue, who kindly gave me of his time and understanding. To Robert Schectman, whose facts helped answer certain puzzling questions. To Mrs. Sylvia G. Lisnoff, secretary of the Hebrew Ladies Auxiliary (Ahavath Shalom Congregation), for her help and information regarding the synagogue building. (Her brother, Marvin Geller, was the first Bar Mitzvah in the remodeled shul). Also for her permission to read the Hebrew Ladies Auxiliary Book, which will go into the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives. And last but not least, to my talented student, Marvin Futtersak, who spent time and effort in furnishing interesting details (not in the original Yiddish minutes) which he heard directly from the recollections of his grandfather, Abraham Sternbach, and to others.
A NOTE ON
RABBI MOSES ZISKIND FINESILVER, 1847-1922
by MARTHA B. KATZ-HYMAN

In his article on the Congregation Sons of Zion of Providence, Beryl Segal noted that the Congregation’s first hazzan and shohet* was Eliezer Lipshitz, who began his service to the Sons of Zion in 1883. However, a document recently catalogued at the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts, indicates that Moses Ziskind Finesilver, and not Lipshitz, was the first to perform these services for the congregation.

This document is a letter of recommendation from the congregation, written on August 22, 1880 and signed by Raphael Marcus, president; Selig Lipsky, vice-president; and Joseph Epstein, recording secretary. It indicates that Finesilver had served as their hazzan, shohet, and mohel* for two years, and that he was leaving because the congregation could no longer support him and his family.

According to a letter from Finesilver’s grandson which accompanies the document, Finesilver was born in Augustow, Poland in 1847, married Deborah Leah Berman, and was granted a kabbalah to practice shehitah** in 1870 by Rabbi Eliezer Simcha Rabinowitz. Two years later in 1872, he arrived in the United States and became the religious leader of the Russian congregation in Elmira, New York.

He came to Providence in 1878 as the first shohet, hazzan, and mohel of Congregation Sons of Zion. Following his service in Providence, Finesilver went to New York City, where he held various positions from 1880 to 1922, among them butcher, shohet, and matzah baker. The surviving records of Congregation Adat Jeshurun em Anshe Lubtz, also known as the Eldridge Street Synagogue, in the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society, record his service to the congregation as shammash (sexton) from 1885 to 1892, and his membership in the congregation until at least 1910. Finesilver died in New York in 1922.

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*Hazzan, cantor. (Hebrew) Shohet, ritual slaughterner. (Hebrew) Mohel, person authorized to perform circumcision. (Hebrew)

**Kabbalah, in this context authorization to perform ritual slaughter. (Hebrew) Shehitah, ritual slaughter. (Hebrew)
NOTES

¹Beryl Segal, “Congregation Sons of Zion—The Orms Street Synagogue,” Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, vol. 4, no. 3 (November, 1965), pp. 239-277.
EZRA—A JOURNAL OF OPINION

by Rabbi William G. Braude

The masthead of the publication reads "Ezra, a monthly journal issued by the Order of Ezra,* Providence, Rhode Island, January 1911, Vol. 1, No. 1."

The first article or leader is captioned "Our Purpose" with a quotation from Scripture as its subhead: *For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching statute and ordinance in Israel* (Ezra 7:10).

Sixty-seven years after the event the purpose of this Yiddish publication and of the order which sponsored it has both urgency and freshness, as may be seen from the excerpts which follow.

"The journal is the organ of our Order, more accurately, of our spiritual Order of Ezra," the leader begins. The text continues:

"Not everyone may know that such an Order exists, so we now have the opportunity to say that for nine months such an Order made up of the best element has existed. To it belong men who, aside from preoccupation with the world of business, are concerned with still another world, with Judaism, a world of spirit as important as one's personal interests and ambition.

"To be sure, everybody talks about Judaism, but not all who hawk it, know what it means. Frequently people do not know how to answer when asked what Judaism means in depth. So we will approach the problem by stating negative manifestations [of so-called Judaism].

"In our community we have, it would seem, everything—synagogues, societies, lodges, philanthropic institutions. Yet the root, the essence, which we intend to deal with, is lacking.

"Lodges, by way of example, and philanthropic institutions are concerned with physical ends—with Jews, not with Judaism. Synagogues and Talmud Torahs** are only apparently founded for the sake of Yiddishkeit. When examined more closely, however, one finds Judaism's rich content missing. Because the younger generation is neither with nor of the synagogue, it is incapable of influencing Jews in matters of morality.

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*The organization appears never to have received a state charter.

**Hebrew schools.
"As for Talmud Torahs, only a small number of children attend. There they study Hebrew as a science much as elementary science is studied in the [public] school. Thus in the Talmud Torah the child is not taught to feel as a Jew. Not his heart but his head is engaged.

“Our local community lost its Jewish radiance. People seek to ape Christians—not their good traits but their bad ones. Among us there have already occurred shootings, suicides, debaucheries. Instead of spending time in higher matters, matters which tend to enoble one's heart and give beauty to one's being, time is spent at cards and other forms of gambling, the like of which had never been heard of among Jews. The old-time modesty of our daughters—modesty which distinguished us—is no more. All is permitted—up for grabs. The Jewish milieu which had ever been so rich in spirit is no more. Everything is coarse and cynical. Our young people are steeped in all manner of wild sports, in the sport of fighting for example—but in nothing Jewish.

"After the destruction of the First Temple in the period described as the Babylonian exile, the great scribe Ezra found the Jewish world in Persia in a comparable state. Thereupon, by means of his genius, Ezra, whom the Talmud ranks as second only to Moses our teacher, redirected his people shattered in both spirit and body—redirected them to Judaism. The Order of Ezra intends to do for the Providence Jewish community what Ezra had done for the entire Jewish people. Since the existing journals whose goal is ‘business’ write not what the public needs, but what it wants, what pleases it, and what stimulates vulgar sensations, we shall write what is good and useful, in order to waken the feeling of nobility, and revive the divine spark in Jewish hearts."

The signer of this call to moral rearmament is Raziel, no doubt a pseudonym.

In keeping with the highminded goals set forth in the leader, there follow two articles, one concerning decolletes at a ball sponsored by the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and the other containing a bold proposal to provide separate schooling for Jewish children.

The ball referred to apparently took place on November 17, 1910. In the opinion of Ben Yosef, another pseudonym, no doubt, the decolletes of many women present exceeded all norms of decency. Were these women, the writer asks, counterparts of those daughters of Zion whose “wanton glances” and “mincing gait” Isaiah denounced (Isa. 3:16), “counterparts perhaps of Roman women of Nero’s day, or are they, as they should be, daughters of two thousand years of exile, Jewish women
of Russia, Poland, and Rumania long distinguished for morality, chastity, decency, purity, and integrity? Where did these virtues vanish?" The writer "cannot comprehend why a ball organized by our German Jews could in no time at all blow away all those virtues which for so many years set our women apart?

"Whose is the blame? Is it altogether the blame of our German Jews? No. Our own women are to blame. Insofar as German Jews are concerned they are not Jews, they are Germans of the Mosaic faith." The writer has no concern with them. But he does appeal "to the Russian and the Polish women, the Yachnes, Soshes, and Grunes, daughters of Shprintzes, Maryashes, and Yentes."* These women he asks: "Where did you learn such goings on? Surely not at your mothers'. Your mothers would have been ashamed to put on such garments even in the presence of their own husbands. Your mothers covered not only their bosoms but even their hair."

A disquisition follows on standards of true society. Such standards depend not on jewelry or clothing. A spiritually mature man or woman will never behave or clothe himself indecently.

The second article signed by "Ariel," another pseudonym, deals with education. Uncle Sam, the writer declares, understands that the best means of assimilating the many peoples which make up America and having them forget their country, language, and national traditions is the free public school—a most effective melting pot:

"Some nationalities who have come to the United States have therefore founded schools where children are brought up in their native tradition. But the Jew who has come from lands of persecution eagerly breathes in America's free air, and the very freedom which he enjoys robs him of former loyalties so that he throws off his faith, his mores, and the obligations to his people and to his children's upbringing. 'Let the local school committee take care of my children,' he says. And the school committee brings up his children in the ways of America, sans Torah, sans Yiddishkeit, totally alienated from their own people, indeed, often from their own parents.

"Our children (Ariel goes on) have no Jewish education at home, on the street, or at school. Even Orthodox Jews send their children to a Talmud Torah for no more than two hours a day.

"To our regret our Talmud Torahs are not proper institutions for bringing up a generation of Jews.

*Girls' names. (Yiddish)
“To begin with, the Talmud Torahs of Providence can accommodate no more than 250 children. Then, too, our Talmud Torahs are not independent institutions with fixed income, proper installations, the right kind of administration, and adequate program. Our Talmud Torahs are attached to synagogues, which means that a synagogue with a spare room or two opens up a Talmud Torah, so-called. Nickels are collected to maintain it; and thus, God help us, is Torah taught.

“Whenever money runs out in such a Talmud Torah the synagogue mashgichim ("overseers") close the ‘school’ for a while until additional money is gathered.”

Therefore, Ariel concludes: “We must tax ourselves to provide sufficient means for one Jewish educational institution—a single institution in which our children will receive both Jewish and secular training. Such an institution should not be shackled to the different congregations. It must belong to the people, must be maintained by the people, and the sole authority is to be the people who, one may be certain, will find the right personnel to supervise so important a venture.”

Thus, as long ago as 1911, the unknown Ariel called for the establishment of a Jewish Day School.

Other items in the issue speak of young women banded together as "Irresistibles" who meet at 61 Benefit Street where Mrs. Gomberg helps them “to improve their manners and moral behavior, something which the public schools fail to do.”

The journal, Ezra, it is said, is available at Bakst’s Drug Stores, at North Main Street corner of Smith, and at 230 Plain Street.

The next issue promises to make people weep and laugh by means of a theatrical drama which Ezra will provide.

We do not know whether subsequent issues appeared. But the one issue we have ranks Ezra, alongside The Organ (1895-1898) edited by David Blaustein (1866-1912) and the Passover Journal (1929-65) edited by Alter Boyman (1884-1966), as a significant journal of opinion published in Providence.
NOTES

1 In his Gazetteer of Hebrew Books, Aaron Freimann mentions Ezra and the Rhode Island Israelite (ca. 1896) as being in the possession of the New York Public Library (see New York Public Library Bulletin 49 (1945), 355, s.v. "Providence"). Regrettably, the Library's searchers could not locate the Rhode Island Israelite, but they did locate Ezra and provided a photocopy of it for the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.


3 The leadership of the Orphans' Home started by Russian Jews was taken over by the so-called German Jews, that is, members of Temple Beth-El (see Goldowsky, ibid.), who in fact were a mixed bag—"Germans" and "Russians".

*The owner was Adolph Bakst, father of Miriam (Mrs. Selig) Greenberg.
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS—TOURO SYNAGOGUE
1977 ANNUAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
LETTER CEREMONIES*

by Louis R. Liss, Presiding

The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue is most pleased to welcome you all to this historic and hallowed place for the annual George Washington Letter Ceremonies.

The letter from the first President of the United States was addressed to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport in 1790 in response to a letter from Moses Seixas, warden of the Congregation, congratulating George Washington upon his election to the Presidency. This letter is noteworthy because in clear and concise language it expresses the philosophy of the freedom upon which our nation has been founded.

The ceremony today marks the fact that 187 years have passed since this letter was dispatched to the Congregation in Newport. Yet its sentiments are timeless, and these sentiments are as valid today as the day on which they were written. Americans of all races, creeds, colors, and political persuasions should give daily thanks to the Almighty that after 200 years these very principles are still the basic tenets of our Democracy and that our America is still “the Land of the Free”.

I do not know how it is with each of you, but for me coming into Touro Synagogue is a very special experience. Every time I step through its doors I feel the rush of history and I see before me the drama of the many historic events that took place. An intense emotion of patriotism wells up within me, and I find myself sharing the patriotic feelings and the deep love of this country that possessed our Newport brethren of Colonial times.

Strange indeed it is to me that this deep sense of personal and individual patriotism is not as valued today and that there are even those who scoff at the simple faith and staunch loyalty that can inspire such feelings. As much as we would like it to be, our Democracy cannot be perfect. Man himself is not perfect, so that the most that can be expected of our democratic society is a mirror of man and a reflection of the consensus of opinions derived from the people.

Yet daily we hear carping voices belittling our purposes and the accomplishments of our nation. In the 200 year life span of our Republic,

we have had our good and glorious years. We have had our bad and difficult times. In our good and glorious years, and so too in our bad and difficult times, we have always been a united people with a singleness of purpose which in our good years carried us to the highest level of national fulfillment, and in our bad years gave us the strength of prevail and overcome.

It is in our Years of Doubt, such as we are going through now, that we find ourselves a divided people. Some of our citizens have permitted themselves to succumb to a multitude of doubts:

- Some doubt themselves.
- They distrust the leaders whom they themselves have elected.
- They look with suspicion upon their government and its functions.
- They belittle the principles upon which this nation was established.
- They deny the very existence of many of the blessings which are part of every American's daily life.

Such doubts are a very corrosive force, and if permitted to continue and grow can actually destroy the very foundations of our American way of life.

For those who have lost faith in America there is a lesson to be learned from today's exercises. On this day and in this place it is most appropriate to speak out to these "doubters" in our midst. During the most trying days of the Revolutionary War, George Washington was surrounded by many doubters and detractors. Yet here we are 200 years later, and see what our nation has built! Just try to imagine where we might be had we then listened to the carping voices of the doubters. What better place is there to speak out from than this 214 year old house of worship, the oldest synagogue in the United States—a living example of the greatness and divine purpose of our nation. What better advice can we give to those who doubt the virtues of our system of government than the advice contained in the George Washington Letter:

>If we have the wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we can not fail, under the just administration of a good government, to become (and to be) a great and a happy people.

With your indulgence before we begin the program, I should like to say a few words of a personal nature. The privilege of presiding at the George Washington Letter Ceremonies is an honor that I never anticipated. I
wish to thank the Friends for honoring me by inviting me to do so. In fact I am so touched and so thankful that I am moved to utter the Hebrew blessing which seems to me to be the most fitting for this occasion.

כְּרוֹחַ אֲחָת וּבַאֲלָהֵיהּ מַלֵּךְ עַל עִיר.

בְּהֵמָה לְעֵילָה נִשָּׁה

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast kept us in life, and hast preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.
The story of Touro Synagogue mirrors the experience of the American Jewish community since its early founding. It is not only reflective of that experience, but also demonstrates the vitality of that community and its adaption to different conditions, situations, and periods of time.

The Congregation had very little right to succeed, prosper, and ultimately have the oldest surviving synagogue building in the United States, a building renowned throughout the world for its simple beauty and character and one of the few structures of Jewish origin listed as a National Historic Site by the National Park Service.

A similar situation befell the American Jewish community which took root on American soil in the mid-seventeenth century. It, too, had no right to survive. For over two centuries this small group struggled and somehow managed to stay alive. Its numbers were always quite small—from 23 in 1654, when the first group arrived in New Amsterdam, to 1790, 130 years later when the total amounted, at the most, to 2500 of the recorded population of 2,500,000, or 1/10 of 1 per cent of the population.

If that group had been concentrated in one or two areas, it might have accounted for some continuity, but that was not the case either. Besides Newport and New York, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, and Philadelphia were the only cities having any measurable numbers with, believe it or not, Charleston, South Carolina, having the largest community.

Then, as now, the temptations for assimilation were great, if not greater than they are today. The ease with which one was able to be absorbed into the general population is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that there are so few surviving direct descendants of early American Jews who still admit to being Jews.

At the beginning of the 19th century the future of the Jewish community in the United States was so clouded that no trained European rabbi would ever dream of coming here and assuming a pulpit; nor were there formally trained rabbis occupying positions in the few congregations which existed.

We thus had a small, scattered, diminishing population with incidentally a low birthrate and a high degree of assimilation. The future was indeed bleak.

So was the situation with Touro Synagogue—the tides of war, the changes in trade and shipping, and the commodities being handled led to a decline in the numbers and prestige of the entire community, but particularly the Jewish community. Attracted elsewhere, Jews sought opportunities in the newly developed cities of the East and Midwest and, by mid-century, were among the early permanent settlers of California. Still their numbers were small, managing at that time to comprise less than 1 per cent of the total population before the Civil War.

Then, just as a quirk of fate, or God’s will, ordained it, major external events took place which changed the face of the American Jewish community as well as Touro Synagogue. For the Synagogue the major event was being named a beneficiary of the estate of Judah Touro, thereby providing financial stability. For the general American community it was the influx of both German and Russian Jews, which ultimately led to the revival. Both interacted with one another to bring us to the present day. Yet, all of these events were unforeseen, unexpected, and beyond our control. The actions of both individuals and governments appeared to have been directed by some guiding hand which changed the nature of the Jewish history of one small community and of one great nation.

So, it has been both the material wealth of Judah Touro and the numbers and teeming influx of the new immigration of the 19th and 20th centuries which have led not only to a reawakening of the American Jewish community, but also to its forging ahead to a position unparalleled in accomplishment, position, and prestige. Only in America were such achievements possible; only in America could a modest building and Congregation achieve international prominence and acclaim; and only in America could the son of two very humble immigrant parents have the privilege and honor of speaking in the Congregation where “presidents and poets” have sat.

In this respect Touro Synagogue serves as a symbol for all Americans—it truly is ours as a symbol of both freedom and opportunity.
THE PLIGHT OF ISAAC TOURO
by RABBI THEODORE LEWIS

We have recently come across a most interesting document from the Carleton Papers — British Military Headquarters Papers, Vol. 56, No.6394(2). It details the unhappy economic plight to which Rev. Isaac Touro was reduced following the Revolution, and at the same time it indicates with whom his sentiments were during the Revolution. He had to appeal for assistance from the British Commander-in-Chief to enable him to go with his family to Jamaica. It is ironic that the father of two of America’s most notable philanthropists should have been reduced to such straits. Of course, Abraham was only eight years old and Judah, seven, when their father made his application for charitable support. The text follows:

To His Excellency Sir Guy Carleton, KB, General and Commander-in-Chief, etc., etc., etc.

The Petition of Isaac Touro, late Rector of the Jewish Synagogue at Rhode Island.

Humbly Sheweth,

That from the distresses which your Petitioner suffered from Persecution for his attachment to Government and coming with His Majesty's Troops from Rhode Island to this city, he was so reduced in his Circumstances that had it not been for the humane intereference of General Tryon, General Marsh, and other respectable Persons, he must have sunk under the weight of his afflictions and Distress.

That from their kind patronage, the Bounty of Government has been extended to him and he has made shift to support himself and family.

That Your Petitioner is now anxious and desirous of removing himself and family to the Island of Jamaica but is incompetent to defray the expense of his passage, etc.

That the only resources he has left him is Your Excellency's Humanity and Benevolence in the hope that you will grant him an advance of One Twelve Months allowance which would effectually enable him to accomplish his wishes.

Reprinted from the Touro Monthly, publication of the Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue) of Newport, Rhode Island, Vol. XIII, No. 5, January 1977, with the kind permission of the author and the publication.

See also front cover and caption on inside front cover.
Your Petitioner therefore Humbly Prays that Your Excellency will be favorably pleased to order a twelve month's allowance to be paid to him to enable him to remove with his family to the Island of Jamaica.

And as in Duty bound, he will ever pray, etc., etc.

New York, 12 Dec. 1782

Isaac Touro
RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

The Twenty-third Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, attended by a record number exceeding one hundred and ten members and guests, was held on Sunday afternoon, May 15, 1977 in the Jewish Community Center, 401 Elmgrove Avenue, Providence and was called to order at 2:40 P.M. by the President, Benton H. Rosen. Following greetings by the President, the Secretary's Annual Report read by Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky was accepted. Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer, reported a total of $1,672.74 to date, with $698.84 of this in the checking account and $973.90 in the savings account. Louis J. Sweet, Finance Chairman, projected a balanced budget of $6,000.00 for the ensuing year with a like amount of income.

Mrs. Abraham Horvitz, Librarian, gave a colorful summation of how the library activities have expanded, with examples of the kinds of inquiries made and services given.

In the absence of Melvin L. Zurier, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Professor Marvin Pitterman, Vice President, read the report of the Nominating Committee. He presented the following slate of officers for re-election: Benton H. Rosen, President; Dr. Marvin Pitterman, Vice President; Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Secretary; and Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer. Since there were no counter-nominations from the floor, the secretary was instructed to cast one ballot for the slate.

Jerome B. Spunt, Chairman of a committee (whose members were Professor Pitterman and Mr. Zurier) to re-evaluate the Association's Constitution, made the following recommendations for change, as approved by the Executive Committee. The Constitution has been extensively revised. Major amendments have to do with the size and composition of the Executive Committee. It has been enlarged by two members-at-large, thus now numbering twelve, plus the officers. The Librarian and Editor will be appointed by the Executive Committee instead of being elected constitutional officers, thus making them members of the Staff.

Mr. Rosen showed examples of memorabilia given to the Library and appealed for such gifts, as well as for memberships among the guests present. He urged people not to throw away their back issues of the Notes, but to give them to the Association.

He introduced Dr. Patrick T. Conley, Chairman of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission and Professor of History at Providence Col-
lege, who gave the Seventh Annual David Charak Adelman Lecture titled “Rhode Island Immigrants, 1824 to 1924.” These dates signify the mass immigration of the Irish in 1824 and the discriminatory immigration act of 1924.

The 1790 Rhode Island census saw a very homogeneous population of 69,000; by 1865 three out of eight Rhode Islanders were Irish. In 1815 the first Franco-Americans came from Canada to Woonsocket. These people now number 180,000. The Germans and Swedish were also important immigrants during this period (1860-1890), with the Germans numbering 20,000 today. The British continued to come throughout this whole period. The later immigration included the Italians (currently 175,000 to 180,000) and the Polish (50,000).

The Jewish people came in large numbers to Providence in the 1880s and 90s, as well as to other communities. There are now between 25,000 and 27,000. The Armenians emigrated fleeing from persecution. They are an upwardly mobile people like the Jews. Also settling in Rhode Island were the Greeks, the Syrian-Lebanese, the Lithuanians, and the Ukrainians, the latter coming to Woonsocket. In addition, there are now 30,000 to 35,000 blacks in the state. Altogether sixteen groups came to Rhode Island between 1824 and 1924.

After the President again appealed for the giving of records, papers, and other memorabilia, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 P.M. With Mrs. Benton H. Rosen in charge and Mrs. Bernard Segal and Mrs. Erwin E. Strasmich assisting, a collation was served following the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky
Secretary
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
by SEEBERT J. GOLDSKY, 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:

   Many Rhode Island items, too numerous to mention.

   This classical work contains many Rhode Island items, too numerous to mention.

   Pages 33 and 34. Lopez and Hart of Newport.
   Page 51. Abraham R. Rivera was a member of the Artillery Corps of Newport in 1790.
   Pages 55-57. Letter of Moses Seixas of Newport to G. Washington and reply.
   Page 372. The names of four Jews from Rhode Island are listed as having served in the Union Army in the Civil War.

   Pages 3, 16-18, 64, 73-76, 136-137, 164. Items relating to the Jews of Newport.

   There were several Jewish students in the graduating class and student body.

   Page 112. In article on "UN Resolution on Zionism" mentions a paid advertisement in the Providence Journal of January 6, 1976, signed by a group of persons of Arab descent and others, which denied that anti-Zionists were antisemites and repeated "the litany of Arab charges against Israel".
   Pages 231 and 237. Gives the estimated Jewish population of Rhode Island.
   Page 589. Lists RIJHN.

   While there are no references of Rhode Island interest, it is mentioned on the dust jacket that Doctor Goldman was founding rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Providence.

Pages 612 to 630. Contains an excellent history of the Jews of Rhode Island (pages 612-620) and sections on 12 cities and towns (pages 620-630) listed alphabetically from Barrington to Woonsocket.


A history of the theater and cinema in Providence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Page 113 et seq. Abraham A. Spitz and Max Nathanson in 1897 started in the theater business in Providence.

Pages 208, 248 et seq. Jacob J. ("Jake") Conn engaged in theater business from 1916.

Page 212. Ottenberg and Kanan build and operate the Gaiety Theater.

Page 218 et seq. Isaac Rose and the Silverman Brothers, Charles and Archibald, build and operate the Strand Theater.

Page 303. Harry's (Kosher) Delicatessen on Clemence Street.


Pages 4 and 5. Among the committee members are Morris J. Wessel of the Immigration Education Bureau and Mrs. William Loeb of the Providence Section, Council of Jewish Women.

Opp. page 19. Photo of a Jewish neighborhood.


Opp. page 23. Photo of Goddard Street, a Jewish neighborhood.

Page 23. Jewish and Italian predilection for building three-deckers and tenements.

Page 24. Jews spreading along North Main Street.


Page 47. Toilet facilities in Jewish houses.

Pages 66 and 67. Rents on Chalkstone Ave., Goddard St., Charles St., and Branch Ave.

Opp. page 990. Houses on North Main Street.

11. *The Immigrant Woman.* Anne Phillips, Editor. Special Edition of the *Mirror,* containing several articles which are edited transcripts of interviews conducted by graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Rhode Island Extension Division, trained in Oral History Methodology. *Mirror,* Vol. III, No. 1, University of Rhode Island Extension Division, Spring 1977.


The President's message contains a listing of B'nai B'rith activities during World War II, including those in the Rhode Island and New England areas.

Among the tributes is the letter of George Washington to the Hebrew congregation of Newport, R. I.


Contains listings of RIJHN, authors of papers on R. I. Jewish historical subjects, and a number of papers by subject matter on R. I. Jewish Historical subjects.


Pages 4, 22, 25, 26, 38, 67, and 160. Newport colonial merchants and business community mentioned.


Pages 375-400 "Colonial Jewry: Religious, Domestic and Social Relations". This paper is largely devoted to New Amsterdam and New York. On page 380 Newport is mentioned, and on pages 397-398 Aaron Lopez and his family are mentioned.


Page 319. RIJHA is listed.


This issue is devoted to three papers on the philosophy and writings of Roger Williams.

Pages 115 to 126 contain an essay on "Love and Order in Roger Williams' writings" by Robert I. Bronkow. On page 122 is a statement on his contention that toleration should be extended to the Jews.

Pages 127 to 129 contain a paper on "Roger Williams' Most Persistent Metaphor," by Bradford F. Swan. On page 128 is a quotation in which Williams likens his treatment of Jews to that of a ship's captain, who should let them worship as they please.


A number of prominent persons were present at exercises, which took place in Newport, Rhode Island on May 23, 1976. (The booklet does not give this date.) The day's activities took place at Rosecliff, a Newport mansion, and at Touro Synagogue.


Page 11. Illustrations of the Newport National-Old Colony Bank (Abraham R. Rivera House) and the Peter Buliod House (Moses Seixas House).

Contains many names both of historical and contemporary relevance to Rhode Island.

Page 400. A bibliography of United States references.


Story of his life from his birth in Vilna, Lithuania in Czarist Russia. Contains a rather complete genealogical sketch, including paternal and maternal grandparents.
NECROLOGY

ADELMAN, LOUISE H., born in Brookline, Massachusetts, June 26, 1904, the daughter of the late Morris and Genevieve (Neuhoff) Zielmann. She was the widow of the late David Charak Adelman, founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

She was a horticulturist who specialized in herbs and plants of the Bible and had served as a consultant to the American Bible Society. She was awarded the Mary Duff Walters Award for church gardens for the garden at Temple Beth-El on Orchard Avenue in Providence (Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David), and the Sears Roebuck Civil Beautification Award for the garden at the John Howland School in Providence. She was the founder and first president of the Eden Garden Club of the Sisterhood of Temple Beth-El.

Died November 7, 1977 in Providence, Rhode Island.

BLACKMAN, DOCTOR ALDEN, born in Providence, Rhode Island, December 29, 1935, the son of Rose (Leve) and the late Charles Blackman. A 1953 graduate of Classical High School, he was a 1957 graduate of Dartmouth College and a 1961 graduate of the University of Vermont Medical School.

Doctor Blackman was active in the Boy Scout movement and was appointed chairman of the Jewish Committee on Scouting. He interned at George Washington University Hospital, Washington, D.C., and was assistant resident in medicine at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. He was chief resident in medicine at the George Washington University Division of the District of Columbia General Hospital, Washington, D.C. In 1967 he served as a fellow in gastroenterology at the Rhode Island and Veterans Administration Hospitals in Providence, Rhode Island, and later became a fellow in gastroenterology at Tufts University School of Medicine and a fellow in medicine at the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts. He entered the private practice of internal medicine specializing in gastroenterology in 1969. He was a clinical assistant professor in the Brown University Program in
Medicine and chief of the section of gastroenterology at Roger Williams General Hospital.

He was a diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians, a Physician on the active staffs of The Miriam and Roger Williams General Hospitals and an Associate Physician at the Rhode Island Hospital.

Doctor Blackman was an active and dedicated community leader. He had recently been appointed to the National UJA Campaign Cabinet in recognition of his leadership in his own community. He was a member of the Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts of America, the Board of Trustees of Temple Emanuel, the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the American Cancer Society, and chairman of the Jewish Committee on Scouting.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, June 6, 1977.

FIERSTEIN, LESTER I., born in Providence, Rhode Island on September 14, 1904, the son of the late Charles and Lena (Shushansky) Fierstein. He attended public schools in Providence and was a 1922 graduate of Hope Street High School. For over thirty years he was a manager of Kays-Newport Shoe Store in Providence. Mr. Fierstein was a member of Temple Emanuel, the Touro Fraternal Association, and Redwood Lodge, F. & A.M., a past president of the Trowel Club and the Royal Arch Chapter, and a member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.


PEARLMAN, ISRAEL, born in Poland, December 2, 1898, the son of the late Abraham and Anna Pearlman. He was co-founder and operator with his wife of the Sterling Shoe Company. He was a graduate of the University of Michigan.

He was a member of Temple Emanuel and its Men's Club, the Providence Hebrew Day School Corporation, the school's scholarship
committee, and the board of directors of the New England Academy of Torah. Other affiliations included the Rhode Island Masonic Lodge, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, the Jewish Community Center, and the Providence Hebrew Loan Association. He was a former member of the Businessman's Association. He was a former member of the Businessman's Club of the YMCA for many years. He was a Navy veteran of World War I and a business and religious leader in Providence for 56 years.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, December 6, 1976.

PRANIKOFF, DOCTOR M. LEO, born in Beverly, Massachusetts, November 17, 1924, the son of Jenney (Rosenthal) and the late Joseph Pranikoff. He was Chief of the Department of Ophthalmology at The Miriam Hospital and Associate Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at Brown University Medical School, and was also on the staff of the Rhode Island Hospital. A member of the American Medical Association and the Rhode Island Medical Society, Doctor Pranikoff was certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology in 1957. He began his practice in Providence that year. He was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in 1963, and was appointed by then Governor John Chafee to the state Medical Center's advisory council.

He was graduated from Tufts College in 1947 and from Tufts Medical School in 1951. He served his internship at Rhode Island Hospital from 1951 to 1952, and was a junior assistant rotating resident there from 1952 to 1953. He attended the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine from 1953 to 1954 and served a three-year residency there under the late Doctor Edmund Spaeth. During World War II he served as a medical corpsman in France with the 14th Armored Infantry Division.

He was a member of the Bristol Yacht Club, the University Club, and Temple Emanuel.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, July 31, 1977.
LILLIAN RUBINSTEIN, born in Brooklyn, New York, February 3, 1909, the daughter of the late Doctor Ilie and Annie (Berger) Berger. A 1926 graduate of Classical High School and a 1930 graduate of Pembroke College, Mrs. Rubinstein lived most of her life in Providence. She was a member of Temple Emanuel, its Sisterhood, the Providence Hadassah, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the Brandeis University National Women’s Committee. She was also active in the Jewish National Fund. She was an accomplished musician.


SILVERMAN, HERMAN N., born in Troy, New York, October 10, 1883, the son of the late Joseph and Lena (Bielinski) Silverman. He was educated in his home town public schools and attended night school at Cooper Union in New York City. He was for almost 70 years a resident of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, where he conducted his clothing store business on Main Street and was very active in civic affairs. He brought energy to the growth of the town and is remembered as a man with the business sense to build a firm that three times grew too large for its quarters, and the civic sense to extend generous credits to his neighbors during the dark days of the Depression. According to members of his family, he fathered many ideas thought to be outlandish, which later proved to be prophetic. He earned the sobriquet of “Mr. East Greenwich.”

Before opening his business in East Greenwich, he had been a traveling salesman. In 1927 Mr. Silverman served as chairman of the town’s 250th Anniversary celebration, which drew 50,000 visitors, and 50 years later was appointed honorary chairman of the 300th Anniversary celebration which he did not live to witness. He was active in the Chamber of Commerce, of which he was president for several terms. He was an original trustee of Kent County Memorial Hospital and was a director of the town’s Visiting Nurses Association. During the 1938 hurricane he headed the town’s disaster group and during World War II was a member of the Oil Ration Board. He was among the founders of the East Greenwich Savings and Loan Association, and for 30 years served on the advisory board of the Industrial National Bank.
Mr. Silverman was a member of the King Solomon and Redwood Lodge, F. & A.M., the East Greenwich Lions Club, the Odd Fellows, the Temple Beth-El Men's Club of Providence, and the Varnum Continentals. In 1971 he won a Rotary Club award. He was a lifetime honorary East Greenwich fireman.

Died in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, January 13, 1977 in his ninety-fourth year.

SMITH, ARCHIE, born in Providence, Rhode Island, June 3, 1908, the son of the late Harry and Mary (Moverman) Smith. Former state public utilities administrator. He was chief counsel to the state Supreme Court's disciplinary board and had served for 18 years as an assistant attorney general. Mr. Smith was nationally known in the cable television field and lectured throughout the country at various television conferences. Before retiring from the Public Utilities Commission, he told federal officials that Rhode Island needed a nuclear power plant, but he stopped short of endorsing the New England Electric System's proposed nuclear facility at Charlestown, Rhode Island. In 1975 Mr. Smith was awarded the John O. Stitely Distinguished Public Service Award for "outstanding, distinguished and dedicated service" in the field of public administration.

He was a founder and past president of the Providence Hebrew Day School. The Providence Hebrew Day School awarded him its Amudim Award and he also received the Amudin Award of the National Association of Hebrew Day Schools. He was educated in the Providence public schools, and was graduated from Brown University, Harvard Law School, and the University of Chicago, where he received a doctor of laws degree. He was a past president of the Roger Williams Lodge, B'nai B'rith, and of the former Ahavath Sholom Synagogue on Howell Street in Providence. He was a member of Congregation Sons of Zion, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the Providence Chevra Kadisha.

ERRATA, ADDENDA, AND CORRIGENDA

The following items all refer to RIJHN Vol. 7, No. 2, November, 1976:

Front cover. The caption for the cover picture reads "Scene Lower Chalkstone Avenue—circa 1903." According to Miss Ruby Winnerman the store shown in the illustration was a variety store located opposite Shawmut Street. This would correspond to 163 Chalkstone Avenue. In 1903 a variety store was operated at that address by William Sugarman. In 1911 the operator was Benny Make. Doctor Maurice Adelman also recalls a store at that location.

The editors would welcome any information which would further identify the store and its operator or the mother and infant in the picture.

Page 187. The title, "Jewtown, a Picture Essay", pp. 300 and 301, was omitted from the Table of Contents.

Page 205. Identification of persons in picture at top of page. Standing on far running board with jacket and wearing hat, Mr. Goldenberg. Front seat, left to right, passenger not identified; driver, Abe Mayberg. Rear seat, left to right, Mr. Lerner, Frank Scoliard, and Jacob Kaufman. Person on near running board, wearing jacket and holding cap, not identified.

Page 219. The synagogue in the photograph at the bottom of the page was incorrectly identified as the South Providence Hebrew Congregation (the Russian Shul). It should have been identified as the Synagogue of Congregation Bais Israel Anshoy Hestreich (as rendered in its charter) or the "Robinson Street Shul" (also the "Galizianer Shul"). A better transliteration of the Hebrew would be Beth (or Bet) Israel (Yisrael) Anshey Oestreich (Austria).

Page 220. The caption under the photograph should have read "Machzekas Hadas." This again is the rendering in its charter. It would have been more properly transliterated as Machazihe Hadas ("Upholders of the Faith").

Page 231. Identification of persons in picture. Louis Berman at left, not an owner of Berman's Spa. He owned a store across the street and happened to be visiting the store when the picture was taken. Behind the counters are Jack L. and Ruth Berman.
Page 234. Upper photograph. The following photograph showing charter members of The Miriam Hospital Association is reproduced because the child standing at the doorway to the right, identified as Ruth Woolf (later Mrs. Joseph Adelson), was obscured by shadow.

Page 234. Lower photograph. Second row should read, left to right "Mrs. Louis Shanbrum" and "Louis Shanbrum."

Pages 300 and 301. Attribution "Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society and the American Jewish Archives" was omitted.

Page 327. The following paragraph was omitted from the minutes of the "Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Twenty-second Annual Meeting." It should have been the fourth paragraph:

Mrs. Abraham Horvitz, Librarian, reported a great increase in telephone inquiries, as well as requests by letter from all parts of the country. In reporting the variety of services provided by the library, she cited the example of the use of the Association's archives by Professor George H. Kellner and a graduate student from Rhode Island College in their Ethnic Heritage Studies project. This was for the purpose of setting up ethnic studies curricula for use in various Rhode Island school systems. The project was funded by a federal grant, and as one of the assisting organizations the Association received $200.00. Mrs. Horvitz credited the Community Voice, official organ of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, for its excellent coverage of the Association in its monthly issues in a column called "Remember When?"
Crown (Ketter in Hebrew) for the Torah Scroll of Congregation Ahavath Shalom, West Warwick, Rhode Island. (Donated in memory of the late Mrs. David Frank by her family). Photo courtesy Professor Harold Sternbach. For more on Congregation Ahavath Shalom see page 420 et seq.