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# Jewish Immigrant Farmers in the Connecticut River Valley: The Rockville Settlement

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scores of East European Jewish immigrant families settled in farming communities scattered throughout New England, the Middle West, and parts of the western frontier. This article focuses on a small community of Jewish immigrant farmers in the Connecticut River Valley known as the Rockville Settlement. One of the period's most successful Jewish farming communities, the Rockville Settlement — largely unnoticed by American Jewish historians — merits scholarly investigation.<sup>1</sup> What were the reasons for the settlement's success? How did its residents cope with the hardships of rural life? What impact did the Rockville Settlement have on other residents of the Connecticut River Valley? This study traces the Rockville Settlement's early development. It also examines the acculturation of the Rockville settlers, particularly what Americanization meant to them as well as to sympathetic and antipathetic observers of Jewish immigrants in the early decades of the twentieth century.

## *Farming and Productivization*

In 1897, Jacob and Shifra Rosenberg, a Russian-Jewish immigrant couple newly arrived in the United States, bought a piece of land near Crystal Lake, approximately fifteen miles northeast of Hartford, Connecticut. The Rosenbergs were the first Jewish farmers in the vicinity of a Connecticut rural area known as Rockville-Vernon-Ellington. According to the "Ledger of the Jeshurun Society of Russian Refugees Who Settled on Farms in the Rockville-Vernon-Ellington Area," a Hebrew document written in 1905 by Samuel Levine, the Rosenbergs created their homestead "through the labor of their own hands and by the sweat of their brow."<sup>2</sup> In the next few

years, Levine and several other Russian-Jewish immigrants followed the Rosenbergs. "Armed with few belongings but with a strong will and a determined spirit, we searched for a place to settle and through the righteousness of the Lord [we] chose this place... the Connecticut valley... in the area of Rockville-Vernon-Ellington."<sup>3</sup>

The first Jewish settlers in the vicinity of Rockville-Vernon-Ellington were primarily Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Capable and industrious individuals, they chose farm life "out of a love for the land and their neighbors."<sup>4</sup> This dual theme — love of land and love of neighbors — recurs in the extant literature of other Jewish immigrants who subsequently joined the Rockville Settlement. Recent oral histories indicate that this theme endures as a central feature of the local Jewish community's popular culture.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the early settlers had little or no previous agricultural experience. Not surprisingly, the community's first years were characterized by a high degree of group intimacy, including economic interdependence and efforts to preserve the settlement's self-contained nature.

The evolution of the Rockville Settlement was not a spontaneous or isolated phenomenon. Similar Jewish agricultural enterprises took root in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Virginia.<sup>6</sup> Though the last word in this regard has yet to be written, these efforts highlight the trend of "productivization," also known as the back-to-the-land movement, common among East European Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of productivization originated with the *narodniki*, a Russian populist movement that used the concept in its campaign to politicize the Russian intelligentsia. After the pogroms of 1881, productivization became an important feature of secular popular culture among East European Jews.<sup>8</sup> This generational impulse also imbued whole groups of Jewish immigrants with a strong social and political purpose.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most striking examples in this regard were the Russian-Jewish agricultural movements Am Olam ("Eternal People") and Bilu (an acronym for the biblical phrase:

"House of Jacob, come let us go" [Isaiah 2:5]). The Am Olam and Bilu movements, which organized Jewish immigrants for farm life in the United States and Palestine respectively, laid much of the ideological groundwork for the first generation of East European Jewish pioneers. The groups articulated compelling philosophies of physical toil and spiritual fulfillment, and they tapped an idealistic vein in the psyche of tens of thousands of Russian-Jewish radicals. The conquest of the soil, both groups asserted, symbolized the transformation of Jewish life in toto.<sup>10</sup>

While the notion of productivization offered a blueprint for Jewish physical and spiritual regeneration in America and Palestine, it was particularly well suited to the needs of the *Yishuv* (the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine) because it could be applied equally to agricultural and industrial pursuits. In the United States, however, economic necessity propelled most Jews in the directions of light industry and small entrepreneurship. In fact, studies of the period demonstrate that many East European Jews who fled the squalor of tenement life in New York City turned to agriculture only as a last resort.<sup>11</sup> In reality, therefore, the Palestinian *halutz* (pioneer) had a combination of actual and apparent choices denied the Jewish immigrant in the United States.

Even the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (JAIAS)<sup>12</sup> originally an American department of the Baron de Hirsch Fund and incorporated as a separate organization in 1900, "studiously avoided all extravagant back-to-the-land propaganda."<sup>13</sup> For while JAIAS resettled several thousand Jewish immigrants on farms across the country, "in doing so, the Society realized that it was running counter to economic trends."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, JAIAS regarded Jewish colonization in the United States as an essential political act. In 1921, for example, when Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, drastically restricting Jewish, Slavic, and Italian immigration, JAIAS aggressively campaigned on behalf of the cause of Jewish farming. According to Gabriel Davidson, the managing director of JAIAS, developing a "class" of Jewish agriculturalists "from a people to whom farming was for two thousand years a proscribed occupation" would result in remaking the immigrants "a happy, contented and permanent part of [the] national organism." From a political perspective, he asserted,

Jewish farming was a matter of "national eminence" and "transcendent import."

Our nation's greatest problem is the Americanization of the immigrant. If Americanization is not confined solely to the teaching of English, civics, and of the theories of government, but is conceived to be broad enough to embrace all activity tending to elevate the standards of living, then the work of our Society in all its manifold phases is Americanization of the highest type.<sup>15</sup>

Against the background of rising American nativism, the significance of Davidson's statement is noteworthy. His assessment of Jewish farming was both a public relations tactic and a self-critique. On the one hand, Davidson and JAIAS sponsors claimed, the organization's efforts transcended ethnic and partisan interests. Supported by American Jewry's patriotic, albeit elite, patrician leadership, JAIAS purported to advance interests of the American people as a whole. At the same time, Davidson's successful model of immigrant acculturation was a counterargument to restrictionists of all shades and a rallying call to American Jews of varying ethnic backgrounds. Working the land, developing its potential, and supplying the nation with essential produce were, in his estimation, all visible signs of personal industry, economic independence, and Americanization.

The intertwined notions of productivization and Americanization had a profound impact on the character of early Jewish settlement in Rockville-Vernon-Ellington. In the event, so did the expedient policy of JAIAS. Many of the original Jewish settlers, the majority of whom came from the Pale of Settlement (the area of Russia to which the Jews were confined by the tsarist regime), were directed to the Connecticut River Valley after only a brief stay in New York City. Most were enticed by the prospect of receiving assistance from JAIAS, and a handful of them actually had some previous agricultural experience. Without exception, all of the immigrant would-be farmers exploited the unusually favorable conditions for land acquisition in New England. For example, following a disastrous fire in 1898 that devastated much of Colchester, Connecticut, JAIAS targeted several Jewish immigrant families for resettlement there. At

the time, the families were living in "the 'Ghetto' of New York."<sup>16</sup> Weighing the costs and benefits of such a policy, a JAIAS official noted:

The coming of new settlers would undoubtedly be welcomed, but the addition of so many families from the congested sections of New York will be beneficial not only to the families themselves and to the City of New York, but largely to the Jewish farmers in the neighborhood of Colchester, numbering as it is said, nearly 100.<sup>17</sup>

In a majority of cases, JAIAS assisted Jewish settlers "not so much by actual loans as by practical advice both in the purchase of farms and in farm practice."<sup>18</sup> Most of the immigrants were completely unprepared for agricultural work. For this reason, many Connecticut Jewish farming communities came into being in a "helter-skelter fashion."

A poor tailor, peddler, or plain *luftmensch* ["one who lives on air"] from New York bought with the last few hundred dollars a run-down farm somewhere ... (often upon the advice of an unscrupulous real estate agent) and began the hard struggle for subsistence. Another one or two will follow and that will form the nucleus of the settlement.... As the number of Jewish farmers in an area grew, the problems confronting them multiplied.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding these hardships, the Connecticut River Valley, owing to its favorable soil, topography, and climate, was an ideal location for the immigrant Jewish farmers. The region's proximity to the urban metropolis of Hartford, with which the Rockville Settlement was connected by trolley, served as an added inducement and afforded the community with an outlet for social and economic interaction. In sum, despite the settlers' inexperience as farmers, the necessary objective preconditions for successful small-scale agriculture, including accessible channels for marketing produce, were all in place.

As for neighbors, the community closest to the Jewish farmers was the relatively large industrial center of Rockville-Vernon, a town with

an estimated population of 9,000.<sup>20</sup> Most of the inhabitants of Rockville-Vernon worked in one of fifty-two local mills alongside the Connecticut River. The majority of the mills produced wool. The few that did not included a silk mill, a stone mill, and the U.S. Envelope Company. In addition, the community was distinguished by its varied ethnic composition, which included native New Englanders and sizable German and Swiss immigrant populations. Six churches served the religious needs of this multifaceted community: two German Lutheran, one Episcopalian, one Baptist, one Methodist, and one Roman Catholic.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, Rockville-Vernon's diverse nature eased the absorption of the Russian-Jewish immigrants who settled in the area. A pattern of friendly interethnic relations predated their arrival, and this precedent aided the Jewish farmers' regional integration.<sup>22</sup>

In the years before World War I, the average Jewish farm in the Rockville-Vernon-Ellington area was based on tobacco and potato growing. Some also engaged in dairy farming. Between 1900 and 1910, a majority of the incoming Jewish immigrants bought their farms from local Yankee owners. In most cases, the younger generation had left the homestead and the farmers were anxious to sell off their land. In other instances, unprofitable operations or the dying out of local families prompted sales. Similar circumstances led to the sale of many of the local mills, though only a few textile factories were purchased by Jews.<sup>23</sup> Land acquisition by Jewish immigrants spanned the entire spectrum, "from very cheap abandoned farms costing in the neighborhood of \$1000, to farms in a high state of cultivation with expensive buildings" costing as much as \$10,000.<sup>24</sup>

Purchases of the latter variety were more unusual than the former. Yet they were distinguished by the fact that settlers who bought expensive farms were often "from southern Russia ... and were well supplied with means of their own."<sup>25</sup> No in-depth study in this regard exists, nor is it within the scope of this essay to do so. However, JAIAS records as well as interviews with Connecticut River Valley residents do suggest that a small number of Rockville's original settlers possessed significant financial capital. These findings correlate with scholarly studies of other East European immigrants, notably from Warsaw, Lublin, and Galicia.<sup>26</sup> The Rockville Settlement illustrates the fact that while the majority of Jewish immigrants "made the plunge

into farming on slender means," many possessed start-up capital, and a minority was even affluent.<sup>27</sup>

The Jewish farmers in the Connecticut River Valley were motivated by a strong commitment to rural life, a sensibility both practical and ideological in nature. Agricultural life required only a moderate financial investment (a couple of hundred dollars was usually enough to make a down payment on a small farm) and a basic willingness to work hard. The Jewish immigrants, previously denied all rights of proprietorship in tsarist Russia, were enthusiastic about the idea of owning land. This was itself a revolutionary concept for Jewish refugees, most of whom had never worked in agriculture. The desire to live a productive, independent, and demonstrably American life was compelling. As one woman farmer later recalled: "The farm was not just living and making a go of it. It was an ideal. . . . It was also a Jewish dream in those years. We wanted to prove to ourselves that we could be trusted with the land [and] that we could succeed in the fields as well as in the cities."<sup>28</sup>

For East European Jewish immigrants, farming was an unprecedented economic opportunity as well as a testament to their new-fashioned dignity as *American Jews*. Yet the profile of early Jewish farmers in the Connecticut River Valley suggests that prior farming experience was the least essential factor in beginning the new enterprise. This was borne out in the findings of a 1935 Jewish Agricultural Society (JAS) study which concluded: "Manifestly, the American Jewish farmer is not indigenous to the soil, but simply the immigrant Jew transplanted from American city to American farm."<sup>29</sup>

### *Communal Life and Credit Unions*

Jewish communal life in the Rockville Settlement assumed a variety of expressions. A majority of the Jewish farmers were observant and adhered to Ashkenazi (East European) religious rites and cultural traditions. Others considered themselves to be secularists, progressives, socialists, or Zionists. Regardless of their religious orientation and/or political leanings, however, the early Jewish farmers were largely united by a spirit of brotherhood and comradeship.

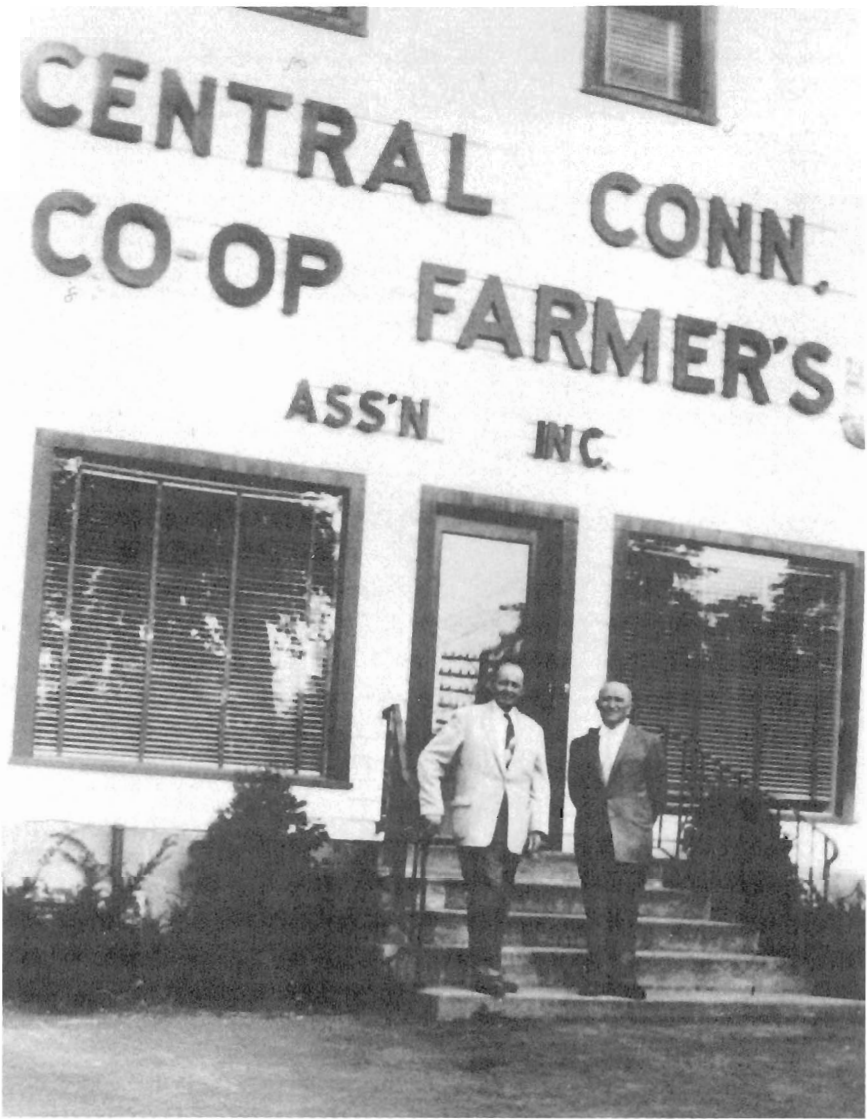
In 1905, several Jewish settlers in Rockville-Vernon-Ellington met at

the home of Aaron Dobkin and established a mutual aid society.<sup>30</sup> Two years later, following the influx of another dozen Russian-Jewish refugee families, the society was officially reconstituted as the Connecticut Jewish Farmers' Association of Ellington (CJFA).<sup>31</sup> The association assisted ill members, mediated disputes, organized cooperative purchases of fertilizer, and conducted collective selling of local Jewish farm products. Acting as a safety net, the CJFA provided members with short-term loans in times of extraordinary material and financial need, and it took a special interest in the welfare of newcomers. It also served as a general social and religious framework for much of the Jewish farming community. The CJFA families conducted Sabbath and holiday services in members' homes until the organization established a synagogue in 1913.

To be sure, the *modus operandi* of the CJFA was similar to that of the *gemilus hesed*, the communal loan association at the center of Jewish life in the East European shtetl (village). The *gemilus hesed* advanced funds to community members in need and was the hub of the shtetl's network of organized and informal support systems.<sup>32</sup> Unlike American Jewish *landsmanshaftn* (mutual aid societies) of the period, which were also modeled after the *gemilus hesed*, the CJFA was open to all local Jewish farmers regardless of their town of origin. The CJFA also bore a strong resemblance to the Russian *obshchina* (peasant commune)<sup>33</sup> and the Palestinian *moshav* (Jewish farming collective).<sup>34</sup> Like these agricultural colonies, the CJFA was a response to a combination of social and political pressures, and it reflected a profound interest in the cooperative principle.<sup>35</sup> Owing to its significant social and economic function, the association quickly became the cornerstone of the evolving Jewish community.<sup>36</sup>

By 1909, the CJFA counted seventy-two members in its ranks. In just a few years, it had become the second-largest of the seven Jewish farmers' agricultural associations in the state. The others were the Colchester Jewish Farmers' Association (143 members), the Montville Farmers' Association (64 members), the Independent Hebrew Farmers' Association of Chesterfield (63 members), the Jewish Farmers' Association of Fairfield (58 members), the East Lyme Association (40 members), and the Litchfield County Jewish Farmers' Association (20 members).<sup>37</sup> When JAIAS created the Federation of Jewish Farmers of America in 1909, a national umbrella framework of Jewish agricul-





*Offices of the Central Connecticut Co-op Farmers' Association*

tural associations, the Connecticut Jewish farmers comprised its largest constituent group.<sup>38</sup>

Over the next decade, Jewish farmers in the vicinity of Rockville-Vernon-Ellington enjoyed a wave of prosperity and enlarged their farm holdings. In comparison with the circumstances of other Connecticut Jewish farmers, the *American Jewish Year Book* noted that "the poorest farms are in the Berkshire region, while the best farms are in the fertile Connecticut River Valley.... It is not uncommon for a Jewish farmer to realize as high as \$6,000 in one year from the sale of tobacco alone."<sup>39</sup> A JAS official later observed:

Tobacco combined with dairy was ... favored by the early settlers in the fertile Connecticut River Valley, around Hartford, Ellington, Somers, and Rockville. Jewish farmers played a prominent role in developing the marketing and processing phases of the tobacco industry and fortunes were made and lost early in the century by Connecticut Jewish tobacco raisers, especially in the high priced shade tobacco. Ellington and the surrounding area was the leading and most prosperous Jewish farming community early in the century.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the relative prosperity of the Rockville Settlement, agriculture in the Connecticut River Valley was an uncertain enterprise. Tobacco and potato crops were risky undertakings, subject to fluctuating market prices and unpredictable weather. Crop insurance was unknown in this period, and there were several instances in which summer hail storms destroyed valuable tobacco fields.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, a "lack of sufficient rain during the growing season could reduce the potato [harvest] to a fraction of normal."<sup>42</sup>

The circumstances of the Jewish farmers and the services provided to them by the local agricultural associations were carefully monitored by JAIAS officials. Although no Jewish free loan society previously existed in Connecticut, discussions arose in 1907 concerning the financial hardships faced by many Jewish farmers.<sup>43</sup> The solution most favored by JAIAS was the proposal to establish "agricultural credit banks and associations [like those] which [were] doing such good work in European countries."<sup>44</sup> In 1909, the matter was formally presented at a meeting of the board of directors of JAIAS, and a decision

was taken to investigate the best method for establishing a system of cooperative credit for Jewish farmers. The general manager of JAIAS, Leonard G. Robinson, who played a leading role in the general credit union movement, was especially influential in this regard.<sup>45</sup> After several months of research, the investigating committee submitted its final recommendation:

In the case of the Jewish farmer some form of agricultural credit is of prime importance.... It is therefore planned to initiate a system of Cooperative Local Credit Associations somewhat on the lines of the "Raiffeisen System."<sup>46</sup> ... The benefits to be derived from a cooperative credit system are not only material ... but it is of still greater value from an educational point of view. It will strengthen local communities and will instill in their members a spirit of self-reliance.<sup>47</sup>

In 1910, JAIAS authorized the appropriation of funds for the creation of three experimental credit unions: the Jewish Farmers' Cooperative Credit Union of Rensselaer County, New York; the Jewish Farmers' Cooperative Credit Union of Fairfield, Connecticut; and the Jewish Farmers' Cooperative Credit Union of Ellington, Connecticut. Then, on May 1, 1911, "the first cooperative agricultural credit banks on American soil" were opened for business.<sup>48</sup>

The credit unions were organized in a simple manner. All authority for administrative and financial decisions was vested in the membership. The par value of each share was \$5, and members were entitled to buy as many shares as they chose. However, each shareholder was limited to one vote, and all members had an equal voice in credit union affairs regardless of the number of shares they owned. Credit union funds were earmarked for productive and urgent purposes. In general, monies were apportioned for periods of six months or less and in amounts of up to \$100.<sup>49</sup> JAIAS supplied each of the three credit unions with \$1,000 at 2 percent interest. This sum, combined with a seed fund of \$500 raised by each credit union, comprised the starting capital used for loan purposes.<sup>50</sup>

The three credit unions soon expanded to eight, and they exhibited significant progress during their first year in operation. In this time, they floated 342 loans worth \$23,375, an aggregate figure nearly six

times their total share capital. The net profit of each credit union was \$425.88, i.e., an average rate of more than 11.5 percent per annum on the original investment<sup>51</sup>

In all, nineteen credit unions were formed in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts between 1911 and 1915.<sup>52</sup> Although they were established under Jewish auspices, the New England credit unions were open to all farmers regardless of race, creed, or religion. In some cases, they served to engender friendly relations between Jewish and non-Jewish farmers in the same area.<sup>53</sup> The credit unions were frugal with respect to the number and size of loans extended, and despite rapid growth they methodically maintained a position of financial solvency.<sup>54</sup>

The success of the Jewish farmers' credit union system attracted widespread attention. In 1912, for example, E.W. Kemmerer, a leading Princeton University economist and architect of the United States' Agricultural Bank in the Philippine Islands, observed that "a real beginning in the direction of cooperative agricultural credit was made last year through the influence of the [JAIAS]."<sup>55</sup> In another instance, the *Indianapolis News* framed its discussion of congressional proposals concerning "cooperative credit for farmers" in an editorial titled "The Jews Ahead":

We do not need [congressional] commissions to hunt knowledge. We need simply to follow the lead of these Jews and set to work to provide credit. And we need to do it just as they did — which is simply to do it . . . . So these practical people, without waiting for anything, simply patterning after one of the German systems and on their own account, have started a credit system that all American farmers could start for themselves.<sup>56</sup>

The twentieth century's second decade was a prosperous time for Jewish farmers in the Connecticut River Valley. Most expanded their field crops, and almost all of them built sizable homes. In fact, their homesteads now averaged approximately eighty to a hundred acres in size.<sup>57</sup> Also during this period, the value of diversified farm holdings became apparent to many farmers in the region. Until the outbreak of World War I, the staple crops of the Jewish farmers were broad-leaf tobacco and potatoes. Now most sought to take advantage

of the growing dairy market and establish herds of their own. Unlike the initial "plunge" into agriculture, many Jewish immigrants in Connecticut were accustomed to dairy farming from Eastern Europe.<sup>58</sup> In 1916 their dairy interests were augmented by the Federal Farm Loan Act, which provided government loans on unusually favorable terms. The funds, extended at low interest and payable over a period of twenty to thirty years, surpassed the capacity of the local credit unions. The availability of funds, growing dairy market, and prudent counsel of JAIAS field representatives combined to make it possible for many Jewish farmers to phase out their agricultural holdings and invest in livestock.

According to Cyrus Adler, one of the era's most prominent Jewish leaders, the Rockville Settlement reached "its height" in these years.<sup>59</sup> The most potent symbol of the Jewish farmers' success was the building of the Kneseth Israel synagogue in 1913. It was the first synagogue built by a Jewish farming community in the state.<sup>60</sup> A plot of land (60 feet by 100 feet) located at Abbot and Middle Roads was donated by farmers Julius and Molly Sugarman for this purpose. Leon Dobkin drew up the plans for the simple two-room structure (30 feet by 40 feet), the total cost of which was estimated at \$1,500. The monies required to build the synagogue were raised by the CJFA. The important American Jewish philanthropist Jacob Schiff, who served on the JAS board of directors, also donated funds to help with construction.<sup>61</sup>

The plans called for "a...modest wooden structure with two rooms partitioned off by a four foot high wall topped with a row of windows. In keeping with the Orthodox tradition, the room that would contain the ark with the [Torah scrolls] was for the men, and the other was for the women. The women's section would also be used for recreational purposes, and contain a pot-bellied stove."<sup>62</sup>

It is instructive to note that despite the physical and social hardships caused by the community's small size, the farmers generally adhered to Jewish tradition. This meant, on the one hand, that Sabbath work restrictions were observed even at the peak of the harvest season. On the other, propriety dictated that a *mehitzah* (partition) be built in the synagogue to separate men and women, though neither side ever contained more than a couple of rows of chairs! Despite such traditional standards, the synagogue community maintained

a rather liberal social agenda. The constitution contained eleven provisions which, in part, stated:

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, the dwelling places of Israel, they are places of worship and prayer. And we, in the bounty of your joyous prophecy, the comrades of Knesseth Israel, members of the farmers association and owners of farm settlements in the region of [Rockville-Vernon-Ellington] wish to construct a house of worship.... In order to maintain group cohesiveness, we formulate the following constitution and by-laws:

1. The synagogue will be called Knesseth Israel ["The Gathering of Israel"], and the name of the fellowship will be Knesseth Israel Fellowship. The synagogue will serve as a permanent memorial to its builders, who came to the land of freedom from their native country, Russia; all of whom fled persecution and frequent pogroms by that wicked regime.

2. The Ashkenazi form of prayer will be followed. In order to avoid friction among members, other forms may not be introduced.

3. No one is allowed to purchase a permanent seat in the synagogue. It is permissible to rent a seat for the High Holidays only.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, the constitution stipulated that no aliyah (the honor of being called to read from the Torah scroll) could be bought or sold. Rather, aliyot were to be "divided fairly among the worshippers one after another without favoritism."<sup>64</sup> It also provided that anyone who donated \$10 or more to the building fund could become a synagogue member. It explicitly stated, however, that no one was to be denied membership due to an inability to pay.

This document offers an unusual perspective for examining the Jewish community of Rockville-Vernon-Ellington. First, the synagogue's founders explicitly created the constitution "in order to maintain cohesiveness." This statement suggests the possibility of dissent, or at least multiple viewpoints, amongst the community members. Second, the new house of worship was dedicated to the memory of those who fled their native country, Russia, because of the frequent pogroms. While this statement illustrates the immi-



*The Brown farm, Canaan, Connecticut*

grants' complete rejection of Eastern Europe, it also testifies to their faith in America as a haven and a land of opportunity. Moreover, it is curious that Russia as a whole is noted rather than a specific town or region. This reflects the fact that settlers came from different towns and villages within the tsarist empire, and it also follows the inclusive precedent established by the CJFA in 1905. That Mother Russia is cited, but plays no role in restricting the synagogue's membership, indicates the immigrants' readiness to adopt the American notion of pluralism.

Although the pogroms were a central concern of the Jewish settlers, the document's implication that they had themselves been victims of anti-Semitic riots in Eastern Europe is not borne out elsewhere. Neither the extant archival literature nor the oral histories of the immigrants' descendants provide evidence in this regard. One scholar explains this phenomenon as "the power of the pogroms metaphor."<sup>65</sup> As a result, a nuanced approach to the Rockville settlers' motivations is called for, one that accounts for a wide range of personal, social, political, regional, and economic factors. Though the settlers may have been only indirectly affected by the pogroms, no doubt the threat of such atrocities was an essential aspect of their collective mental outlook.<sup>66</sup>

The mixture of Jewish immigrants in the Connecticut River Valley gave rise to a spectrum of Jewish religious observance and practice. This explains the second rule in Knesseth Israel's constitution. In the Rockville Settlement, a majority of like-minded Russian-Jewish worshippers feared the possibility of creeping stylistic subversion. They appear to have been suspicious of the Rumanian Jewish immigrants who arrived in the area shortly after the original Russian-Jewish settlers.<sup>67</sup>

Most likely, however, they were particularly wary of the German-Jewish establishment in nearby Hartford. The religious norms of these two communities were almost diametrically opposed. For example, in the late nineteenth century Congregation Beth Israel, one of Hartford's largest synagogues, introduced such innovations as "a mixed choir, family pews, Confirmation ... and, as time went on, an organ."<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, in 1906 Beth Israel adopted a constitution stipulating that "male members and visitors attending divine services shall be obliged to uncover their heads during the service."<sup>69</sup>

The Orthodox members of Knesseth Israel considered such prac-



tices deviant and the notion that “divine service... [should] be conducted in conformity with the requirements of the times” was anathema to them.<sup>70</sup> They were also concerned about the growing influence of secularism and the deleterious effects of farm life, which created persistent pressure to work on the Sabbath. In contrast to Beth Israel, the members of Kneseth Israel sought to preserve the Old World structure of synagogue life, the one framework over which they exercised nearly complete control.

Interestingly, the members of Kneseth Israel did opt for free and unassigned seating in the synagogue. Thus, while men and women sat separately, the congregation clearly tempered its internal hierarchy. Equality among the members derived from a confluence of forces. First, the precedent of a pluralistic infrastructure established by the CJFA had a significant impact on the social makeup of the synagogue. Second, the fear that many families would not otherwise attend services was ever-present. Third, free and unassigned seating was also a position that unified the community. On the one hand, it could be viewed as an American improvement on an Old World tradition; one that did not oppose Orthodox Jewish custom. On the other, it ostensibly represented an enlightened perspective from within Judaism—perhaps even a socialistically inspired one motivated by ethical considerations.

In this way, the constitutional directive made a virtue out of necessity. At the same time, it satisfied the synagogue’s diverse membership, including the most and least observant, rich and poor, Americanized and greenhorns, etc. Such seating controversies, as Jonathan D. Sarna contends, “unwittingly served as a vehicle for clarifying both religious identity and ideology. By taking a stand on one issue, people expressed their views on a host of other issues as well.”<sup>71</sup>

In the summer of 1913, the Rockville Settlement gathered for the synagogue’s official ground-breaking ceremony. Other Jewish farmers from the Connecticut River Valley, local townspeople, and even a few dignitaries joined them. The local newspaper reported:

The cornerstone of the new Jewish temple... was laid Sunday afternoon with appropriate exercises conducted by Samuel Levine of Vernon. Louis Franklin, a member of the building committee, laid the cornerstone. On account of the storm the

exercises, which lasted from twelve o'clock noon to four p.m., were held at the home of Samuel Rosenberg. They were followed by a feast.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Dillingham Commission*

The Rockville Settlement's social and economic success attracted the attention of the Dillingham Commission, the notorious congressional committee charged with investigating the status of immigration to the United States. Submitted to Congress in 1910, the Dillingham Commission's report, as Oscar Handlin points out, was fundamentally flawed and "offered an unsound basis for the [restrictionist] legislation that followed."<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the data collected by the commission's field workers are both valuable and pertinent to this study. Focusing on "communities rather than individuals," the report showed particular interest in the immigrant farm "not primarily for its own sake but as a community type." Concerned with "the quality of the farming" rather than quantitative results, the study proposed to deal with "typical, representative farm families only." In this way, it sought to discern the effect of the rural environment on developing the "citizenship and political interest and intelligence" of the immigrants and to consider the "progress, condition, Americanization and outlook of the second generation."<sup>74</sup>

The investigation considered eleven Jewish immigrant farm communities, including the Rockville Settlement. Unlike the Italian immigrant farmers whose communities generally "enriched and improved the land and increased the agricultural wealth of the surrounding neighborhood," the Dillingham report concluded that "the rural Hebrews as a whole... [gave] little to American agriculture." In the aggregate, their experiences were "mediocre or unsatisfactory," and they did not enhance "the rural wealth of their respective states."<sup>75</sup>

Among the "few notable exceptions" to this rule, according to the study, were two colonies, Vineland, New Jersey (originally "founded on a communistic basis") and the Rockville Settlement. To the Dillingham Commission, these communities represented "Hebrew agriculture in America at its best."<sup>76</sup> Apparently, however, even this assessment was relative. For despite the colonists' laudable accomplishments, they still exhibited some key qualitative deficiencies.

For example, "having less local interest," the Jewish farmers tended to be "less active in political matters than the people of the village." Second, though the Jewish community's "general moral tone [was] high" and its citizens were "generally law abiding," allegations that the Jews lacked "business morality... apparently [had] some ground." Third, the Jewish farmers' radical proclivities were evident in a gross "manifestation of lawlessness." This was most apparent in the Vineland colony.

Led by socialist propagandists, a number of settlers refused to make payments on their land or to acknowledge their obligation to pay the purchase price of the land they occupied. They went so far as to make an armed resistance, and several cases of assault and battery occurred. The officers of the land company... were for a time obliged to go armed.<sup>77</sup>

Fourth, in comparison to second-generation Italians, who tended to "remain on the soil," very few of the Jewish immigrants' mature children were "found on the farms."<sup>78</sup> Instead, the study concluded, "the ambitious and progressive ordinarily get at least a high school education and go to New York, Philadelphia or other large cities to engage in commercial pursuits." As a result, the number engaged in farming permanently was "very small."<sup>79</sup> Finally, despite strides in the immigrants' Americanization, the low rate of intermarriage "between Americans and Hebrews" supported the contention that Jewish "assimilation or fusion with other races [was] retarded by religious tradition and rural segregation."<sup>80</sup>

The case study of Rockville, as conducted by the Dillingham Commission, strengthened the stereotype of the Jews as a radical and inassimilable group. However, it is distinguished by an unusual twist, namely, the unparalleled success of Rockville's Jews. This situation necessitated a change in the overall strategy of preparing the report. Rather than merely accentuating negative stereotypes, the authors faced the delicate task of explaining the settlement's progress in spite of the Jewish immigrants. This had to be accomplished without contradicting the commission's original theoretical premises.

To begin with, the report characterizes the Rockville Jewish farmers as "exceptionally intelligent Hebrews" and the "best type of

Hebrew agriculturalists investigated."<sup>81</sup> It also notes that until "recent years the [region's] entire population was of New England stock," signs of which could still be seen in the "old substantially built farmhouses, large farmsteads and fine yards with the great rows of maples and elms." A fine showing of thrift and prosperity.<sup>82</sup> In addition to the score of Jewish immigrant families in this "beautiful farming region," twenty-five German-Swiss families, "several of them directly from their native land," comprised "another important foreign element." Both groups reportedly purchased farmsteads in good operating condition from former Yankee residents and invested heavily in tobacco and dairy farming. The Jews, described as "a well-to-do class of Russian Hebrews, practically all of [whom were] independent proprietors abroad," were said to conduct their affairs "through the instrumentality" of JAIAS.<sup>83</sup> With this help, the Jews, "accustomed to hand[ing] capital in industry" and newcomers to the farming industry, "put their money into land as a productive investment." In fact, the report continued, as "commercial farmers...they look[ed] for more than mere subsistence; they expect[ed] handsome returns."<sup>84</sup>

Describing six successful Rockville "Hebrew farms" in detail, the commission noted that the Jewish immigrants "acquired the holdings of well-to-do owners ... because the children had left them and the labor problem had become so acute that it was impossible for them to make a surplus over living expenses."<sup>85</sup> Although containing an element of truth, this statement bends the evidence to support a preconceived argument, popularized by Francis Walker, a leading economist and president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, that immigrants attained their success by capitalizing on the labor crisis.<sup>86</sup>

Walker and other nativists alleged that this situation would ultimately subvert Protestant hegemony in the New World. What better proof of this could be found than the creeping Jewish take-over of a small rural northeastern town? Buying up "native New England homesteads of the best type," the Jewish settlers — "energetic, alert, active and anxious to advance" — presented a distinct threat. Indeed, in the eyes of the commissioners, Rockville could have been any other farming community in the nation. They desperately wanted to retain their image of America, a phenomenon — to paraphrase

Sinclair Lewis — receding irrevocably into the past: “a town of a few thousand, in a region of wheat and corn and dairies and little groves ... The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kansas or Kentucky or Illinois ... New York State or in the Carolina hills.”<sup>87</sup>

The Dillingham Commission’s report also emphasized the shrewd economic role of JAIAS. Owing to JAIAS, it said, “practically all [Jewish settlers] received advice ... in purchasing land ... and few men have paid too much.”<sup>88</sup> In scores of similar statements, the commission indirectly hinted that the Jews profited from a thinly veiled effort to manipulate the local real estate market. As a result, Jewish organizations like JAIAS assumed conspiratorial dimensions. In fact, however, as previously discussed, JAIAS merely took advantage of economic opportunities already in place in the Connecticut River Valley.

In assessing the Rockville Settlement’s “moral conditions,” the Dillingham Commission concluded that the “economic independence of most of [the] colonists has had much to do with [their] comparatively high moral standard.” With so “many opportunities to realize this condition,” notably the fact that “nearly every Hebrew has a neighbor who is a non-Hebrew,” the study held out the hope that the Jewish immigrant would eventually make himself “respected as a farmer and as a citizen.”<sup>89</sup> The latter statements reveal the paradoxical nature of the Rockville study. Rooted in a quasi-Darwinian premise that the New England environment would ultimately reshape the Jewish immigrants, the analysis nevertheless evaluated the Jewish immigrants under the rubric of chauvinist and racist dogma.

The Dillingham Commission’s report waffled between emphasizing negative stereotypes of Jews and applying exacting Protestant standards to their apparent success. For example, though the Jewish immigrant farmers’ contradicted the image of the Jew as landless, radical, unproductive, and unable to perform manual labor, the study focused on obvious signs of their “primitive” state, e.g., the “unfavorably conspicuous” appearance of the “Hebrew farm home”; “the Hebrew does not give as much attention to repairs on buildings or fences, or to care of his tools, as does his neighbor”; the “thrifless aspect to several of the farmsteads that ill accords with good farming”; the “cluttered and disorderly barnyards and unkept lawns.”

The report also maintained absurd assumptions that the Jews

comprised a conspiratorial group. Substituting a shrewd depiction of Jewish economic behavior for an objective analysis, it ignored the reasons behind the relative prosperity of many Jewish farmers, including their unusual solidarity and the necessity of self-reliance. In this way, as exemplified by the study of the Rockville Settlement, the report demonstrated that the flip-side of Jewish genius remained its inherently mercantile nature and Oriental derivation: "The fact that the Hebrews are traders and bargainers has militated against [their] permanent progress."<sup>90</sup>

As for the so-called "Aryans," the report confidently declared that "both the German-Swiss and the American [were] in advance of the Hebrew." To this end, the commissioners concluded (with a great deal more irony than they realized): "When one considers that [the Jewish farmers] have learned all they know of American life and American agriculture in four years, their present stage of progress is gratifying."<sup>91</sup>

### *Overview*

When Jacob and Shifra Rosenberg settled in the Connecticut River Valley in 1897, they did not anticipate that a score of Russian-Jewish immigrant families would follow them. Nor could they foresee that the Rockville-Vernon-Ellington region would become a thriving Jewish farming community. In two decades, a group of hardy Jewish pioneers transformed a motley collection of homesteads into a model agricultural colony. Despite the Dillingham Commission's insinuations, the early settlers helped to fashion a new positive image of the American Jewish immigrant. It is noteworthy, for example, that the JAIAS Annual Report boasted that the most successful Jewish farming settlements in the United States were located in the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>92</sup> "Phenomenal progress" of this kind served as a catalyst for "the steadily growing drift toward the farm."<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, progress was measured in a number of ways. In 1922, Lewis L. Strauss, a prominent Jewish investment broker and member of the JAIAS board of directors, visited several JAIAS-sponsored colonies in New England. In a letter to his family, he praised the role of Jewish farming in the United States.

The future of Jewish ideals is assured. Let decay and disintegration come—let them attack and destroy the present urban day communities—the real spirit is marching on, strong, healthy, independent, and more truly in harmony with American doctrines than Jewish city life.... [The] children [of the Jewish farmers] are freckle-faced red-cheeked Americans—built from the ground up in striking contradistinction to the pale rickety children of [New York City's Lower] East Side. And the farmers themselves—wherever they are near enough to one another they have their *minyán* [a quorum of ten men required for daily prayers] each week. Where they are isolated, they *daven* [Yiddish for "pray"] with their families. Most of them do no work other than feeding their stock (which is, of course, permitted on the Sabbath). One of them, who used to be a cobbler in St. Louis, said in answer to my question why he liked this life better than the old—"Because now, I can see I got God for a partner."

These men are proving that the Jew is not afraid of hard work—that the soil responds willingly to his plough. The often repeated slur, "The trouble with the Jews is that they are not producers," is likewise laid to rest. We need more of them, however. We have got to break up the ghettos and depopulate the East Sides, drain the slums and put these potential farmers out in the air and the sunlight where they can strike root in the soil and nourish themselves and the country they have adopted.<sup>94</sup>

Strauss's comments illustrate the dual role assigned to Jewish agricultural enterprises by American Jewry's elite. On the one hand, the immigrant farmers symbolized America's potential fulfilled; Strauss clearly considered the colonists' success a litmus test of Jewish acculturation. On the other hand, he and other leading American Jews desperately wanted to move Jewish immigrants away from major metropolitan centers. Wary that the immigrants would strain the Jewish community's resources, they also feared that further urban congestion could result in an anti-Semitic backlash.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Strauss saw numerous regenerative possibilities in the Jewish immigrant farmer. Here was an individual who had adopted new surroundings, learned a new

occupation, changed his or her language, and eventually merged Jewish tradition with Western sensibilities. The ultimate proof of success, however, was the immigrant farmer's child, who, according to Strauss, strongly resembled a stereotypical character in a Norman Rockwell painting.

The Jewish farmers of the Rockville Settlement created a communal infrastructure that profoundly influenced the region. Although the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916 made the Jewish credit unions obsolete, their impact and effectiveness, in cooperation with that of JAIAS, was long-lasting. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, many Jewish farmers in the Connecticut River Valley made the transformation from agriculture and dairy farming to poultry farming.

Until that time, the New England poultry market had largely been the domain of non-Jewish farmers. In order to gain an economic foothold in this sphere, particularly the egg market, a group of Jewish farmers, including a core of veteran Ellington settlers, "decided to form a state-wide cooperative organization which would be non-sectarian."<sup>95</sup> Sixteen founding members pledged \$200 each to establish the cooperative's seed fund. Next, the Co-op raised the capital required to purchase a mill in Manchester, Connecticut. The mill and its offices served as the headquarters of the Co-op, and the members soon organized a system for buying, mixing, and selling feed cooperatively. In the ensuing decades, the Co-op grew swiftly and became a major force in the Connecticut poultry industry. Interestingly, as late as 1953 approximately 90 percent of the Co-op's membership continued to be Jewish farmers. As one observer proudly claimed, the Co-op was "started by a few farmers who had faith in the cooperative movement. They were good and wholesome people and [they conducted their business] in the spirit of the New England tradition."<sup>96</sup>

Jewish immigrant farming in the Connecticut River Valley was a bold, idealistic experiment engineered by JAIAS, sponsored by American Jewry's patrician leadership, and executed by industrious, hard-working East European Jewish immigrants. A test case of the interplay between values, ideals, and pragmatic considerations, the Rockville Settlement demonstrates that Jewish rural colonization — in contradistinction to the Dillingham Commission's claims — was a transformational as well as a transitional experience. The tolerant and favorable conditions of the Connecticut River Valley spurred the



acculturation of scores of East European Jewish immigrant families. In this New World microcosm, the immigrants forged new American Jewish identities for themselves. The Rockville Settlement's early history illustrates the resilience and ingenuity of Jewish immigrant farmers. It also illumines the relative accessibility and openness of American society to ethnic groups of disparate social, economic, and political backgrounds.

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### Notes

AJHS	American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.
CJHS	Connecticut Jewish Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.
CCP	Central Connecticut Co-op, Manchester, Conn.
CKI	Congregation Knesseth Israel, Ellington, Conn.
EPL	Ellington Public Library, Ellington, Conn.
RPL	Rockville Public Library, Rockville, Conn.

1. This article is the first in a projected three-part study of the Jewish community of Rockville-Vernon-Ellington. Part 2 of the study will focus on interethnic relations between the Jewish farmers, the Yankee landowners, and the Swiss-German farmers. Part 3 will examine the development of the Jewish community between World Wars I and II.

2. Samuel Levine, "Ledger of the Jeshurun Society of Russian Refugees Who Settled on Farms in the Rockville-Vernon-Ellington Area in 1905" (unpublished Hebrew MS with Yiddish translation), p. 2, CKI.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Based on oral histories and interviews of Connecticut River Valley residents (hereafter referred to individually) conducted by the author in February–May, 1991.

6. H. Frank, "Jewish Farming in the United States," in *The Jewish People: Past and Present*, ed. Raphael R. Abramovitch et al., vol. 2 (New York: Central Yiddish Culture Organization, 19??), pp. 69–77; Joseph Brandes, *Immigrants to Freedom: Jewish*

*Communities in Rural New Jersey since 1882* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971); Uri D. Herscher, *Jewish Agricultural Utopias, 1880-1910* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981); Phillip Naftaly, "Jewish Chicken Farmers in Petaluma, California, 1904-1975," *Western States Jewish History* 23, no. 3 (April 1991): 231-247; Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron De Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant* (reprint, Fairfield, Conn.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1978).

7. Frank, "Jewish Farming in the United States," p. 76; Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, pp. 116-117.

8. Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 2.

9. Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 35-124.

10. Abraham Menes, "The Am Oylom Movement," *YIVO Annual*, vol. 4 (New York: YIVO Institute, 1949), pp. 9-33; Shulamit Laskov, "The Biluim: Reality and Legend," *Studies in Zionism* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 17-69.

11. Herscher, *Jewish Agricultural Utopias*, p. 116.

12. Owing to its diminishing industrial ventures, the name of JAIAS was changed to the Jewish Agricultural Society (JAS) in 1924. Where appropriate, both acronyms are employed in this study.

13. Gabriel Davidson, "The Jew in Agriculture in the U.S.," *American Jewish Year Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1935), pp. 118-119.

14. Gabriel Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers* (New York: L.B. Fischer, 1943), p. 13.

15. *Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, 1921*, JAIS (I-206, Box 4), p. 44, AJHS.

16. "Colchester, Conn.," unpublished MS of JAS (I-80, Box 44), June 14, 1898, AJHS.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Leonard G. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of Jews in America," *American Jewish Year Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1912), p. 91.

19. "Connecticut and New England," unpublished MS of JAS (I-206, Box 1), p. 8, AJHS.

20. *Merchants' Week Souvenir: Official Souvenir and Program for Merchants' Week Celebration in Honor of the Opening of Trolley Brook Road, May 21-26, 1906*, RPL.

21. Arthur R. Newell, *Glimpses of Rockville, Connecticut* (Rockville: By the author, 1902), RPL.

22. From an interview with Mr. Louis Goldfarb by the author.

23. Arnold M. Shevlin, "A Study of Two Jewish Communities: Rockville, Conn. and Norwalk, Conn." (rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1950), pp. 25-26.

24. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of Jews in America," p. 90.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Jacob Lestchinsky, "The Jews in the Cities of the Republic of Poland," in *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990), pp. 115-116; Raphael Mahler, "The Economic Background of Jewish Emigration from Galicia to the United States," in *ibid.*, p. 133.

27. Davidson, "Jew in Agriculture in the U.S.," p. 129.
28. Mary Cantor, "Pop and the Farm" (unpublished MS, June 1960), given to the author by Mr. Bernie Cantor, p. 19.
29. Davidson, "Jew in Agriculture in the U.S.," p. 128.
30. From an interview with Mrs. Dorothy B. Cohen by the author.
31. Samuel Levine, "Ledger of the Jeshurun Society," p. 2.
32. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), pp. 202–213.
33. A Russian peasant commune, which in many areas involved the periodic repartition and equalization of land holdings.
34. A farmholders' settlement in which each family unit owns its own land, machinery, livestock, etc. The farmers' purchasing, selling, and development is organized on a collective basis.
35. I. N. Steinberg, "Jewish Colonization in Russia," in *The Jewish People: Past and Present*, ed. Raphael R. Abramovitch et al., vol. 2 (New York: Central Yiddish Culture Organization, 19??), pp. 51–55.
36. Levine, "Ledger of the Jeshurun Society," p. 2.
37. Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, 1909, JAIS (I-206, Box 4), p. 42, AJHS.
38. Morton L. Gordon, "History of the Jewish Farmer in Eastern Connecticut" (Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1974), p. 84.
39. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of Jews in America," pp. 90–91.
40. "Connecticut and New England," p. 3.
41. From an interview with Mr. Bernie Cantor by the author.
42. "Connecticut and New England," p. 11.
43. In this period, there were landsmanshaftn (hometown mutual aid societies) and other Jewish self-help associations in Hartford, but they did not offer economic assistance to any Jewish farming settlements in the region. See Morris Silverman, *Hartford Jews, 1659–1970* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1970), pp. 33–34.
44. Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, 1912, JAIS (I-206, Box 4), pp. 16–17, AJHS.
45. Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers*, p. 63; Shelly Tenenbaum, *A Credit to Their Community: Jewish Loan Societies in the United States, 1880–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), p. 143.
46. In 1849, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen created a "loan bank" in Germany. Raiffeisen's aim was to provide peasants and farmers with funds to further the development of small farms. Only persons of "unreproachable character" were awarded loans, and the activities of the bank were confined to small areas such as single parishes and villages. In time, the Raiffeisen system developed into a corporate entity that drew funds from a central bank and advanced monies to individuals at a low interest rates through local credit unions. See John Archibald Venn, *Foundations of Agricultural Economics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), pp. 279–281. See also Tenenbaum, *Credit to Their Community*, pp. 124–125.

47. Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, 1912, pp. 17–18.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
49. Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers*, p. 46.
50. *Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society*, 1912, p. 20.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
52. Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers*, pp. 46–47.
53. From an interview with Mrs. Dorothy B. Cohen by the author.
54. The office staff of the JAS headquarters in New York City destroyed the society's records in the 1950s. The lack of data precludes more than a preliminary examination of information reported in the JAIAS annual reports.
55. Quoted in *Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society*, 1912, pp. 23–24.
56. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 24.
57. Davidson, "Jew in Agriculture in the United States," p. 105.
58. This information was provided by a survey of 600 Jewish farmers in New England. It appeared in Cyrus Adler, ed., *American Jewish Year Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1899–1900), p. 45.
59. *Ibid.*
60. "The Development of Jewish Community Life in Rural Areas," unpublished MS of JAS (I-206, Box 1), p. 2, AJHS.
61. From a brief history of the Ellington Jewish community, unpublished MS, CJHS.
62. Dorothy B. Cohen, *Ellington: Chronicles of Change* (Ellington: Ellington Historical Society, 1987), p. 142, EPL.
63. Samuel Levine, "Ledger of Knesseth Israel, Ellington, 1913," unpublished Hebrew and Yiddish MS, p. 186, CKI.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Steven J. Zipperstein, "Old Ghosts: Pogroms in Jewish Minds," *Tikkun* 6, no. 3 (May–June 1991): 50.
66. In recent years, several scholars have attempted to revise and hone the historiography of the pogroms. As Russian archival sources (previously classified by the former Soviet Union) become available to researchers, the scholarly study of the pogroms will continue to change. The last word in this regard has yet to be written. See, e.g., Jonathan Frankel, "The Crisis of 1881–1882 as a Turning Point in Modern Jewish History," in *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact*, ed. David Berger (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1983), pp. 9–22; Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Shlomo Lambroza, "Jewish Responses to Pogroms in Late Imperial Russia," in *Living With Antisemitism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1987), pp. 253–274; I. Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990).
67. See Lloyd P. Gartner, "Rumania and America, 1873: Leon Horowitz's Rumanian Tour and Its Background," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 45,

- no. 2 (1955): 67–92, especially the information on Rumanian Jewish attitudes to farming in America, pp. 87–88.
68. Silverman, *Hartford Jews*, p. 11
69. From the Constitution and By-Laws of Congregation Beth Israel of Hartford, Conn., in *ibid.*, p. 421.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
71. Jonathan D. Sarna, "Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 384. Anecdotal information suggests that in 1933 geographic dispersion and disparate religious views caused a split in the community. The split led to the formation of Congregation Bnai Israel, situated in present-day Rockville, Conn. The premises for the new synagogue, originally the site of the Rockville Athletic Association, were bought by an ad hoc committee of local Jewish townspeople.
72. *Early Ellington Village* (Ellington: Women's Fellowship of the Ellington Congregational Church, 1975), p. 111, EPL.
73. Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), p. 131; see especially chap. 5, "Old Immigrants and New," pp. 93–138.
74. "Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority," in *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 1 (hereafter cited as "Abstracts") (New York: Arno, 1970), p. 555.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 563, 579.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 578.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 565; "Immigrants in Industries," in *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 22 (hereafter cited as "Immigrants in Industries") (New York: Arno, 1970), p. 137.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 137; "Abstracts," p. 580.
81. *Ibid.*; "Immigrants in Industries," p. 43.
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.
84. "Immigrants in Industries," p. 44.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
86. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 142–143.
87. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921), p. i.
88. "Immigrants in Industries," p. 44.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
92. Annual Report of Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, 1918 (I-206, Box 4), pp. 20–21, AJHS.
93. *Ibid.*

94. Lewis L. Strauss to Lewis and Rosa (Lichtenstein) Strauss, June 19, 1922. Papers of Admiral Lewis L. Strauss, X: 37/4, AJHS.
95. Bill Zuckerman, untitled history of Central Connecticut Co-op, unpublished MS, 1953, p. 1, CCP.
96. Ibid.