

350 Years of American Jewish History:
A Commemorative Collection

The
**American Jewish
Archives**

Journal



Volume LVII 2005 • Numbers 1 & 2

The
American Jewish
Archives
Journal

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350 Years of American Jewish History:
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VOLUME LVII NUMBERS 1 & 2 (2005)



The
**American Jewish
Archives**
Journal

*A Journal Devoted to the Preservation and Study
of The American Jewish Experience*

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Published by

*The Jacob Rader Marcus Center
of the
American Jewish Archives*

Located on the Cincinnati campus of the

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati • New York • Los Angeles • Jerusalem

Publication of this journal is made possible,
in part, by gifts from
Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York
and by the
Dolores and Walter Neustadt
American Jewish Archives Journal endowment fund.

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Cover photo:
Hebrew calendar for the year 5539 (1778–1779) by Abraham Eleazar Cohen, Philadelphia.
(Courtesy Arnold and Dee Kaplan)

The *American Jewish Archives Journal* is indexed in the *Index to Jewish Periodicals*,
Current Contents, *American Historical Review*, *United States Political Science*
Documents, and the *Journal of American History*.


Information for Contributors:

The *American Jewish Archives Journal* follows generally *The Chicago Manual of Style*
(15th Edition) but issues its own style sheet, which may be accessed by visiting the
American Jewish Archives website at:

www.AmericanJewishArchives.org

ISSN 002-905X

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TO OUR READERS...

This 2005 edition of *The AJAJ* commemorates the 350th anniversary of Jewish communal presence on these shores. The contents of this volume do not focus strictly on the 350th activities that occurred during 2004–2005, nor do they aspire to provide the reader with a comprehensive interpretation of the American Jewish experience over the past three and a half centuries. Instead, we attempted to imbue this issue with a commemorative mood. We refer to this mood as a “Commemorative Collection” because we hope that this edition of our journal (which will actually appear in 2007) will, in a modest way, contribute to the interpretive process that must inevitably occur now that the 350th anniversary “belongs to the ages.”

Some have begun to suggest that a growing interest in the American Jewish experience may be attributed, in part, to the widespread public attention that the 350th anniversary attracted. The establishment of a Jewish American Heritage Month, for instance, constitutes one tangible outcome of the 350th. U.S. Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Florida) was the architect and prime mover of a concurrent resolution adopted by both chambers of Congress on January 6, 2006. This resolution urged the President of the United States to issue a proclamation calling on American citizens to commemorate a Jewish American Heritage Month. President George W. Bush did just that in May 2006 when he issued a proclamation that called upon the American people to “celebrate the rich history of the Jewish people in America and honor the great contributions [Jews] have made to the country.”¹ President Bush reissued his call for a Jewish American Heritage Month in May 2007. According to Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz, “The decision of the President and Congress to commemorate Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) followed the highly successful celebration of the 350th Anniversary of American Jewish History in 2004–2005.”²

While several important new syntheses were produced for the 350th, new documents and fresh interpretive analyses of the kind contained in this issue inevitably prompt novel questions that future historians will need to engage. The articles and documentary analyses in this commemorative edition highlight this phenomenon. As is often the case with *The AJAJ*, this issue concentrates on selected moments in American Jewish history. However, we have made a conscious attempt to include analyses that examine at least one topic relating to each of the centuries that have passed since 1654, when Jewish communal life in America first took root. Considered in its totality, this issue seeks to underscore one of the 350th anniversary’s most important lessons: We are never done interpreting history! The work of uncovering and reinterpreting the past is never completed.

This issue begins with an article reexamining the history of the Jewish communal settlement that took place in New Amsterdam in 1654. Professor Leo Hershkowitz has devoted much of his productive career to the study of New York

City's history. Over the years, he has uncovered many significant documents that have cast new light on the early history of its Jews. Professor Hershkowitz's essay, *By Chance or Choice: Jews in New Amsterdam 1654*, teaches us that the iconic story of America's first Jewish community is actually an admixture of fact and fiction. He reminds us that it is critically important for the historian to distinguish between demonstrable facts and figments of the imagination. Ultimately, he asks us to reconsider whether it is accurate to assert that the story of Jewish communal life in North America begins in 1654.

Revising history and the importance of distinguishing fact from fiction also play a critical role in Lance Sussman's thought-provoking article on the history of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's infamous "Trefa Banquet," the 1883 feast marking the ordination of the first four rabbis educated at the Hebrew Union College. The event's renowned menu — the only surviving copy of which is preserved in the American Jewish Archives — abounds with nonkosher food items. Sussman's research has convinced him that many of the historical writings on this celebrated banquet are laden with errors and inaccuracies that historians have uncritically accepted and repeated over the years.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, Chabad-Lubavitch became the fastest growing of all American Jewish religious movements. This is a remarkable development for a Hasidic Jewish group that holds to a conspicuously distinctive dress code and a lifestyle that separates adherents from the American mainstream.³ Despite the dynamic growth of Hasidic life in America, historians have given this movement very little attention. Ira Robinson hypothesizes that the scholarly inattention may be due to the fact that the Hasidim themselves were largely oblivious to the historical enterprise and tended not to write memoirs and historical narratives. That American Hasidim were the objects of so much traducement from both Jews and non-Jews, Robinson continues, contributed to this historical blind spot. Robinson's scholarly work on the Hasidim in America begins to address this historical lacuna and, as Robinson himself notes, this new field of study will add greater texture to our overall understanding of the East European immigration and its influence on American Judaism.

This issue's readers will explore four interesting, documentary-based historical studies. First, we include a previously unpublished letter written in 1784 by Rebecca Franks (1758–1823) to her cousin and confidante, Williamina Bond Cadwalader. Rebecca — the daughter of David Franks and Margaret Evans — was born and raised in Philadelphia. As a married woman, she lived in England. Many sources refer to Rebecca as "the Jewish belle" of Philadelphia (though, as Mark Stern points out in his introduction, Franks's mother was not Jewish, so Rebecca was — halahically speaking — not a Jew). This letter constitutes a colorful reflection on Franks's social life in Philadelphia. Stern draws our attention to the fact that though Rebecca and her father sided with the British, this did not seem to impair their associations with those loyal to the revolutionary cause.

Our second document pertains to an interesting eighteenth century American *lu'ah* that comes to us from the remarkable private collection of Arnold Kaplan, a dedicated member of The Marcus Center's Ezra Consortium. This *lu'ah* is a Jewish calendar that, among other things, enabled its owners to mark the onset of Sabbaths and holy days during the revolutionary period. This particular *lu'ah* is unique in that it is the earliest surviving Jewish calendar that is clearly intended to be used by a woman. As Professor Jonathan D. Sarna points out in his helpful annotation, this document sharpens our understanding of the nature of traditional Jewish practice during the early national period.

Finally, the two documentary analyses compare two significant artifacts that relate directly to the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of Jewish life in America. First, Ira Rezak has contributed a comparative examination of the medallions that were struck to commemorate the 250th, 300th, and 350th anniversaries of Jewish life in North America. Although the three medallions share numerous commonalities, Rezak illuminates how each of the three medallions literally bespeaks its *sitz im leben*. Second, we have reproduced images of the rabbinic proclamations that were issued on the occasion of the tercentenary commemoration in 1954 and compared these documents with the joint rabbinic proclamation that was promulgated in 2005 in conjunction with the 350th anniversary. Frederic Krome shows us that the rabbinic proclamations, like the commemorative medallions, testify to the changes that have reshaped the American Jewish community during the last half of the twentieth century.

Aristotle taught his students that “if you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development.” It is our hope that students and researchers will return to this commemorative edition of *The AJAJ* having been reminded that the historical enterprise fosters a never-ending process of new discoveries and fresh insights and that historical anniversaries, such as the 350th, frequently fertilize the soil of historical analysis. Ultimately, the more we discover about our past, the better we know ourselves. Or as the distinguished American litterateur, Robert Penn Warren, once noted: “History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future.”

GPZ

Cincinnati, Ohio

Notes

¹Jewish American Heritage Month, A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America, April 20, 2006, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA), Cincinnati, Ohio.

²Letter on the JAHM, August 2006, AJA.

³Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 297–298.



Manhattan Island as it looked during the mid-seventeenth century when the refugees from Recife arrived in the fall of 1654
(Courtesy The J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York)

By Chance or Choice: Jews in New Amsterdam 1654

Leo Hershkowitz

In late summer 1654, two ships anchored in New Amsterdam roadstead. One, the *Peereboom* (*Peartree*), arrived from Amsterdam on or about August 22. The other, a Dutch vessel named the *St. [Sint] Catrina*, is often referred to as the French warship *St. Catherine* or *St. Charles*. Yet, only the name *St. Catrina* appears in original records, having entered a few days before September 7 from the West Indies. The *Peereboom*, Jan Pietersz Ketel, skipper, left Amsterdam July 8 for London, soon after peace negotiations in April concluded the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654). Following a short stay, the *Peereboom* sailed for New Amsterdam, where passengers and cargo were ferried ashore, as there were no suitable docks or wharves. Among those who disembarked were Jacob Barsimon, probably together with Asser Levy and Solomon Pietersen. These were the first known Jews to set foot in the Dutch settlement, and with them begins the history of that community in New York.¹

A number of vessels arrived and departed New Amsterdam during 1654 and early 1655, including the *Gelderse Bloem* (*Flower of Gelderland*), *Swarte Arent* (*Black Eagle*), *Schaal* (*Shell*), *Beer* (*Bear*), *Groot Christofel* (*Great Christopher*), *Koning Solomon* (*King Solomon*), *Jonge Raafe* (*Young Raven*), and *d'Zwaluw* (*Swallow*). Perhaps Pietersen and Levy were on one of these, but given the extensive use of the *Peereboom*, it seems likely they would have been on that ship. Regardless of which vessel they were on, they came by choice. These were not refugees fleeing imminent persecution.

The second arrival, the Dutch *St. Catrina*, Jaques de la Motthe in command, probably a Walloon or Huguenot, carried, as reported by Pietersen, twenty-three Jews, “big as well as little.” Here the story becomes somewhat confusing. The vessel came from St. Anthony — a place Berthold Fernow, the editor of the *Records of New Amsterdam*, finds was in Brazil, just as he insists at first mention that the vessel was the *St. Charles*, although later correctly writing *St. Catrina*. Strangely, he does not correct his first impression and leaves unquestioned his Brazil conjecture.²

The *Peereboom*, as mentioned, left Amsterdam in July 1654 and, via London, continued to New Amsterdam. As noted, probably several Jews were aboard. One, Jacob Aboaf, departed in London. But who were the others? One was Jacob Barsimon; others were likely Pietersen and Levy. Pietersen, who is not listed in Brazilian congregational records, was seemingly a passenger since he witnessed and noted the arrival of twenty-three Jews on the *St. Catrina*. He says nothing

as to who the twenty-three were. Was his count correct? That number cannot be supported using existing evidence. Levy, a possible third passenger, also was not from Brazil and was not on the *St. Catrina* but was in New Amsterdam when the supposed twenty-three arrived. Originally from Vilna [then Poland] and one of the few Jews whose place of origin is known, Levy, like the other two, was an Ashkenazic or eastern European Jew and obviously chose to travel to the Dutch colony. They were not bothered by Peter Stuyvesant, appointed director-general in 1646 by the West India Company, probably because all three had passports issued by the company. Barsimon's passport is certain. Historians, such as Samuel Oppenheim and Arnold Wiznitzer, have placed Levy in Brazil, but they appear to be mistaken.³ The terrible Khmelnitzki pogroms begun in 1648 were a probable cause of Levy's as well as others' departures from eastern Europe. After that year, the Jewish population, particularly in Amsterdam, grew steadily to six thousand, or 3 percent of the population, by 1700. This expansion mirrored the Netherlands' economic expansion and a flourishing overseas trade.⁴

The intentions of these first three arrivals were clear to New Amsterdam's resident minister, Domine Johannes Megapolensis, who on March 18, 1655, sent a letter to the Classis at Amsterdam, noting, "Last summer some Jews came here from Holland in order to trade." His reference to "some Jews," not one or two, supports the view that there were at least three Jews on the *Peereboom*. He continued, "[A]fterwards, some Jews, poor and healthy, also came here on the same ship with D[omine] Polhemius." This is certainly a reference to the arrival of the *St. Catrina*, which came indirectly from Brazil after the Portuguese conquest in 1654. The clergyman further wrote, "God has led Domine Joannes [Johannes] Polhemius from Brazil over the Caribbean Islands to this place," probably meaning Jamaica and Cuba. (There were *St. Anthonys* at both places, as well as in Brazil.) He then voiced his resentment at having to spend several hundred guilders to support the new, indigent arrivals. Megapolensis continued, "They came several times to my house, weeping and bemoaning their misery. If I directed them to the Jewish merchants, they said they would not even lend them a few stivers." Were the Jewish merchants Barsimon, Levy, and Pietersen? Was the *St. Catrina's* passengers' poverty a result of having their goods and money taken or lost during their voyage from Brazil "over the Caribbean Islands?" Perhaps a good deal of their property had to remain in Brazil after the Portuguese seizure. Megapolensis further argued that the followers of the "unrighteous Mammon" aimed to get possession of Christian property and to outdo other merchants by drawing all trade toward themselves. These "godless rascals, who are of no benefit to the country, but look at everything for their own profit, may be sent away from here."

For Megapolensis, trade and profit were basic motives for those "godless rascals." These "obstinate and immovable Jews," who "come to settle here," he

continued, caused greater confusion in the colony already troubled with having dissident Catholics (Papists), Quakers, Mennonites, and Lutherans. This view of the acquisitiveness of Jews was often used as a reason to try to restrict immigration. For example, in 1641, Johan Maurits, governor-general of Dutch Brazil, was told by resident merchants that the colony was being overrun by Jews and “every contract with a Jew ends in bankruptcy of a Christian.” In his reply, however, Maurits stated that Christians should be more careful, avoiding their “lust for speculation.” Besides, he said, Jews deserved and earned more liberties than others as they have always been “reliable political allies.”⁵ Obviously, this was a view not held by Megapolensis or Stuyvesant.

Who were these “godless rascals”?

On January 26, 1654, some twenty-five years after the Dutch had taken Brazil from Portugal, the colony once again fell to Portuguese control. The gamble of the West India Company had failed. Terms of surrender were, however, very generous. Movable property could be retained, and ships would be provided for those who chose to leave. No reprisals would be taken, including reprisals against Jews, who were largely at Recife, Mauricia, and Pernambuco — principal ports of the colony. Further, three months’ stay was granted, and all, including Jews, would be treated with “great respect and courtesy.” The Portuguese commander, Francisco Barreto, approved these seemingly magnanimous terms. Still, what Jews could carry with them was not clear. Certainly real property remained, but could they keep gold, silver, and jewels? Or were these taken by the Portuguese?

There were at the time about 150 Jewish families in Brazil, most of whom left for the Dutch Republic.⁶ Barreto also provided at least sixteen ships as transport, some Dutch, some Portuguese.⁷ One of the vessels, the Dutch *Valck (Falcon)*, skipper Jon Craeck, left Brazil on February 24 but was driven by adverse winds to Spanish-held Jamaica. Its passengers apparently remained on the island until the end of April, when they might have sailed to Cuba, perhaps on the *Valck*. It is possible, too, that Pietersen’s twenty-three Jews and Polhemius then boarded the *St. Catrina* and sailed to New Amsterdam.

In a document dated November 14, 1654, at the request of the Amsterdam Sephardic community, a representative of the Dutch government wrote to the King of Spain to protest the detaining of Portuguese Jews in Jamaica, in contradiction of a treaty between the Netherlands and Spain. This treaty may explain the presence of the Dutch *St. Catrina* in Spanish territory. The report stated that Jewish passengers had left Recife for Martinique, but winds carried them to Jamaica. Their immediate release was requested.⁸

Whether the *St. Catrina* came via Cuba or Jamaica, it seems certain that it was not the first ship to bring Jews to New Netherland. As seen previously, the *Peereboom* arrived earlier from the Netherlands by choice. Was it a second choice for those twenty-three who sailed from Brazil? But why did both groups select

New Amsterdam? Answers are found in the story of the Dutch Republic, New Amsterdam, and the largely Sephardic Jewish community in Amsterdam.

For those on the *Peereboom* and *St. Catrina*, New Amsterdam could fulfill a variety of dreams and aspirations. This small outpost, managed by the West India Company, was settled to profit from trade in furs and agricultural products, especially grain. But, interest in New Netherland was also related to the remarkable rise of the Dutch Republic during its “Golden Age,” the time of Rembrandt, Grotius, Huygens, masters of art, law, and science. It was also the age of its naval supremacy. Admirals such as Michiel De Ruyter, Cornelis, and Maarten Tromp often defeated their English adversaries. The West India Company, chartered in 1621 following an armistice with Spain, had a member of the States General on the company’s governing Council of XIX and exemplified the aggressive spirit of the republic. Willem Usselinx, a militant Calvinist and one of the leading advocates for establishing the company, was a zealous anti-Catholic refugee from Antwerp who sought revenge against an invading Spain. An added interest in New Netherland could be to establish a base for possible seizure of Spanish treasure carried from Mexico and Peru. In 1628, Piet Heyn captured the Mexican silver fleet, a spectacular victory that helped stimulate the Dutch economy and fund company operations. Certainly a Protestant colony questioned the authority of a Spanish Catholic claim to the New World. Usselinx also reasoned that immigrants and foreigners were a prime asset for the Republic. “It is,” he wrote, “because of foreigners [like himself] that the country will be peopled as its might is derived most from those who come from abroad, settle here, marry and multiply.” New colonies would strengthen the economy. Interestingly, Usselinx wanted to prohibit slavery.⁹

Usselinx’s views on the need for immigration and colonization to strengthen a free nation perhaps influenced these first Jewish travelers to New Amsterdam. In addition, the writings of Adriaen Van der Donck — particularly his *Beschrijvinge van Nieuw Nederlant*, or *Description of New Netherland*, first published in 1655 after his 1649 *Vertoogh*, or *Remonstrance*, published in 1650 — would have stimulated interest. His work was known by 1655, when the thirty-five-year-old author died. Van der Donck, a doctor of laws, graduate of the University of Leiden, became a member of Stuyvesant’s advisory Council of Nine. He was a severe critic of the director-general and the company because of their failure to promote good government and permanent, substantial settlement.¹⁰ *Description of New Netherland*, Van der Donck’s “little book,” contained a very detailed and positive account of the natural abundance found in the province. “It is,” he wrote at the beginning of his essay, “a very beautiful, pleasant, healthy and delightful land, where all manner of men can more easily earn a good living and make their way in the world than in the Netherlands or any other part of the globe that I know.”¹¹

This reference to health is quite interesting. In the seventeenth century, a number of terrible epidemics could have persuaded many to seek a more beneficial climate. In 1636, more than 17,000 out of a population of 120,000 died in Amsterdam; in 1654, almost 11,000 of some 60,000 died in Leiden; and in 1664, more than 24,000 of about 200,000 died in Amsterdam. Surely seeking a “healthy” land was an added inducement to travel¹² and, perhaps, motivation to relocate.

Central to the rapid growth of the republic was the Dutch attachment to freedom and liberty. This was exemplified by the Utrecht Union of 1579, which placed the seven provinces under an elected parliament, the States General, and the leadership of its elected Stadtholder, Willem of Orange, and after 1584 to that of his son Maurice, also the Stadtholder. Medieval economic restrictions were lifted, and the concept of free trade was introduced. This freedom to trade, it could be argued, also promoted tolerance and freedom of ideas and encouraged the first Jews to settle and flourish in the republic.

The rise of this Jewish community parallels the rise of the republic. The histories of the Dutch nation and of Jewish society are remarkably similar. The Netherlands, a small country geographically, achieved greatness, while the Jewish community, small in number, also prospered and contributed significantly to the prosperity and growth of the country. In 1654, the arrival of the *Peereboom* and the *St. Catrina* reflected the accomplishments and ambitions of the “Golden Age.”

The largely Protestant Dutch nation liberated itself from Spanish Catholic domination by the early seventeenth century after an eighty-year war of independence. As mentioned, the Utrecht declaration of tolerance and religious freedom attracted Jews to the republic; they began arriving sometime before 1597, when the first Amsterdam congregation, Beth Ya’acob (House of Jacob), was established. Its synagogue opened in 1614, joining two others formed in 1604 and 1609. It was not that authorities or the people of the Netherlands gladly welcomed these largely Spanish-Portuguese (Sephardic) Jews or the east European Jews who joined them, particularly after 1648; but it was generally recognized by those like Usselinx that members of this community took part in the vital business activity of the East and West India Companies’s ventures and were “among the earliest seventeenth century contributors to the prosperity of the Netherlands in general and Amsterdam in particular.” Officials in Amsterdam made certain such important citizens were not lured to neighboring and competing cities, such as Haarlem or Leiden.¹³

There are still other reasons for the migration to New Amsterdam. With the end of the first Anglo-Dutch War on April 5, 1654, the Dutch were made to pay huge damages to the victorious English, including loss of trade in the Orient. During the war, the building of Amsterdam’s Stadt Huys (city hall)

halted, grass grew in the streets, and begging — almost unknown earlier — became very common. This economic downturn affected decision making. Perhaps poor economic conditions were also a consideration in the minds of the Amsterdam *parnasim* (Jewish religious leaders) in support of colonization. In January 1655, they called attention to the fact that the company had offered land free to immigrants under their 1650 “Freedoms and Exemptions” and that loyal citizens, like Jews, would help pay taxes and increase trade and population. The French and English, perhaps reluctantly, permitted Jews in their colonies. Why not the West India Company? Such arguments were successful, and except for the twenty-three who again did not come directly from Holland, all others probably had required passports.¹⁴ This act of 1650 also stipulated that free individuals obtaining land would have a year to put it under cultivation, and this perhaps mitigated against Jewish settlement. Jews, it seems, did not become farmers.¹⁵

The West India Company’s interest in its colonial possessions was, as mentioned, primarily one of trade and profit and, perhaps secondarily, settlement. Still, as Usselinx suggested, increasing population could be turned into assets. However, New Netherland was a problematic colony from the start, despite its possibilities, and few people — including, of course, Jews — bothered to make the Atlantic voyage.

The region had been “discovered” in 1609 by an Englishman, Henry Hudson, sailing for the Dutch East India Company. The 1497 voyage of John Cabot, who was employed by Henry VII, established England’s initial claim to this part of the New World; Hudson’s discovery solidified it. There was no such right of discovery for the republic, though a number of merchant explorers, such as Adriaen Block, established the first settlements in New Netherland. Still, neighboring English colonies, Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut to the north and Virginia and Maryland to the south, were constant reminders of a threatening English presence. For the English, the Dutch were interlopers. It could be argued that the States General, perhaps aware of a sense of being trespassers as well as having to face rising financial costs, never really fought to retain their possession. The New Netherland Company in 1620 suggested moving four hundred families to New Netherland, but the Dutch Admiralty advised rejection of the proposal as “it might make a bad impression in England and France.” Stuyvesant was concerned about the English, especially from pressure from Connecticut. Therefore, just before a peaceful surrender in 1664, he asked for an overall settlement of boundary disputes between the Dutch and English colonies. Such agreement, reached in 1650, led to the loss of the Connecticut Valley and eastern Long Island. No clear States General mandate was issued for New Netherland — at least none that the republic was willing to fight for. Only just before surrender did Stuyvesant ask for a charter containing the great seal of the States General, an image of authority “which [the] Englishman commonly dotes upon



One of the earliest Jewish communities in the western hemisphere was established on the island of Curaçao in the seventeenth century.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

like an idol.” It was not done. The West India Company, with interests in the Caribbean and southern Africa, had little money or desire to defend the colony. It paid few dividends to shareholders. In 1674, at the time of reorganization, investors received but 30 percent of their deposits, though creditors were paid in full.

The precarious hold of the company on its territory was particularly tested by the surrounding English colonies, especially in the spring and early summer of 1654. Rumors of possible invasion by English forces added to deeply felt unease and a need for help. On July 7, 1654, the directors wrote to Stuyvesant that in “these dangerous times a good quantity of ammunition of war may be sent to them, among which some muskets of 3½ feet in length to be distributed in time of need among the citizens.” This was probably in response to the concern of the director general on news of the arrival of four English warships in Boston and that “the English, living among and under us, would we believe, enter into a plot with our enemies to our great disadvantage.” The letter was sent on May 30, 1654.¹⁶

Stuyvesant wanted to prevent the ship *Koning Solomon* (*King Solomon*) from leaving, as it would weaken defenses by carrying away one thousand to two thousand pounds of gunpowder together with gunners. While the company would profit by sailing of the vessel, “people here would be unhappy.”¹⁷ War or its possibility surely deterred immigration. However, on June 15, 1654, news of the April Peace Treaty with England was received, and immediately the yacht *de Hoen* (*Hen*) was sent to Curaçao. The panic was over for a time and normal trade and commerce resumed. By July 27, the *Koning Solomon* was about to leave for the Fatherland, and by August, the barque *D’Zwaluw* arrived from Virginia. Earlier, the barque *De Jonge Raaf* arrived from the West Indies. The company directors wrote to Stuyvesant and his council to expect the ships *Peereboom* and *Gelderse Bloem* together with “a party of boys and girls from the orphan asylum here [Amsterdam] making first a trial of 50 persons,” this to show

“our zeal in increasing the population but you also must promote cultivation of soil and not rely on English neighbors.”¹⁸ And, it could be added, reduce economic problems in the republic.

The arrival of the *Peereboom* with seeming orphans and some Jewish merchants was a result of the war’s end, the urging of the Amsterdam Kahal (Congregation), changing economic and social conditions, and the desire of the company to increase, perhaps as Usselinx had suggested, population and settlement. For example, a year later, on May 27, 1655, the burgomasters and regents of the city of Amsterdam wrote to the “Noble, Honorable, Wise, Prudent, Very Discreet Sir, Petrus Stuyvesant,” again informing him that, with the West India Company’s consent, some children were being sent from the almshouse to “increase the population of New-Netherland.” Thus, “taking a burden” away from Amsterdam authorities, they requested that the youths be treated “kindly” to the advantage of the company and the children.¹⁹ Despite the arrival of orphans, whose numbers are not certain, and a small increase in immigration, the directors were not successful in maintaining control of the province.

Even with its various problems, Amsterdam was still Europe’s chief financial center. Its free-market economy produced a vast commercial center where French wines, colonial sugar, and Swedish copper were found in endless quantity. Investment capital was readily available. Loans in England could be had at 6 percent, secured by adequate bonds, while in the Netherlands, loans were at 3 ½ percent without “pawn or pledge.” Surely, low-interest rates stimulated the possibilities of the western Atlantic settlement. In 1656, Jews were about 4 percent of the chief investors in the company; by 1658, they were 6 ½ percent. Portuguese-Jewish merchants were of vital importance to the Dutch economy, especially in centering the profitable sugar trade in Amsterdam.²⁰ Maps by Lucas Wagenaar, Nicolas Visscher, and other contemporary cartographers were often decorated with views that depicted the abundant richness of the colony in vivid, complimentary detail. New Netherland was shown as a thriving, flourishing province, full of promise. For the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century, as well as for their Jewish compatriots, it was their “Golden Age,” and all was attainable.

In early 1655, or just possibly late 1654, still another group of Jews arrived in New Amsterdam, all from the republic, all probably granted passports partly as a result of the influence of the Amsterdam *parnasim*. Many had been in Brazil and were part of the 1654 exodus. One, Jacob Cohen Henriquez, was the son of principal investor Abraham Cohen, alias Francisco Vaez de Leon. While Cohen, accused of theft and smuggling, and many of the others did not stay very long, these early arrivals were surely influenced in their decision to go to New Amsterdam by their coreligionist West India Company shareholders.²¹ This must have also applied to those on the *Peereboom*.

Stuyvesant seems not to have objected to those on the *Peereboom* or those coming directly from Amsterdam. However, he did raise questions about the twenty-three in several letters, which were carried by the *Schaal* and the *Beer*. Two letters, dated September 22 and 25, 1654, were to the directors of the company asking, if not insisting, that “these new territories not be invaded” by people of the “Jewish race.” Another letter, dated October 27, was received via England. Stuyvesant’s writing came after the *Peereboom* arrival and seems to have been a reaction to the *St. Catrina*’s passengers. Stuyvesant used the same objections raised by Domine Megapolensis. The directors replied on April 26, 1655, stating that although they recognized these objections:

We observe that it would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil and also because of the large amount of capital, which they invested in shares of this Company. After many consultations we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by said Portuguese Jews, that they shall have permission to sail and trade in New Netherland and to live and remain there provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the Company, or the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will govern yourself accordingly.²²

The Amsterdam *parnasim* had asked incoming Jews — the post-*Peereboom* and *St. Catrina* arrivals — to provide financial aid to the twenty-three indigent Jews. As a group, however, they were primarily interested in possibilities of commercial enterprise.²³ Isaac Israel became active in trade on the Delaware River, as did David Ferera and Joseph d’Acosta, a major shareholder in the company. They dealt in furs, cattle, butter, cheese, tobacco, cloth, and lumber. Ferera bought and sold tobacco in Maryland. D’Acosta was an agent in March 1655 for a newly formed Gilles Verbrugge and Co., engaged in trade between New Netherland and Amsterdam.²⁴

Though Jews asked for permission to erect a synagogue, Stuyvesant did not grant it, and this issue was never pursued. No evident congregation was established, and these early arrivals appear not to be the “Founding Fathers of Congregation Shearith Israel.” Abraham de Lucena, a leader of the last group, had a “Sefer Torah” (holy scroll) given to him by the Amsterdam community, but there was little need for it. De Lucena left New Amsterdam soon after arrival and returned the scroll to its donors.²⁵

Stuyvesant’s dislike of these new immigrants might have also stemmed in part from some Jewish experience in Curaçao. In 1651, a letter by the company directors to Stuyvesant, where he was governor-general of the island, directed him to be aware of one Jan de Illan, who was Jewish, as were his associates, and was under contract to bring a “considerable number of people” to settle on

the island. They wrote that de Illan meant only to trade to the West Indies and the mainland. De Illan instead turned to exporting horses and timber and not importing people. The contract appeared to have been a subterfuge. Surely the incident reinforced Stuyvesant's suspicions and dislike.

Despite the possibilities and wonders described in Van der Donck's books, the dream of success was quickly dispelled for all of the *Peereboom* passengers except for Levy, as well as for all of those on the *St. Catrina* and for the Abraham de Lucena, Salvador d'Andrada, and Joseph d'Acosta travelers. Possibly the last arrived on the ship *Gevelekte Koe* (*Spotted Cow*), Pieter Jansen skipper, but more likely they were on the ship *Great Christofel* (*Great Christopher*), Willem Tomassen skipper, which was in port by spring 1655. The de Lucena voyagers first appear in records on March 1, 1655, when Sheriff Cornelis Van Tienhoven brought "Abram de La Sina, a Jew into court claiming the merchant had kept his store open during the sermon and sold by retail," a privilege reserved for burghers. Tienhoven asked for a fine of six hundred guilders and deprivation of trade. He also declared that Jews arriving last year from the West Indies (those on the *St. Catrina*) and "now from the Fatherland must depart forthwith." The court decided to let the resolution "take its course."²⁶ David de Ferera and Salvador d'Andrada were sued on May 5, 1655, for payment of freight shipped on the vessel arriving in 1655 from Amsterdam. All left after a troubled stay a year or two later.²⁷ Possibly, a sense that the colony would fall to mounting English pressure also hastened their departure.

It would also appear that Jacques de la Motthe of the *St. Catrina* remained in New Amsterdam after the September arrival of his ship. On March 15, 1655, he appeared before the Court of Burgomasters and Schepens as defendant in a suit brought by Tienhoven. He was asked to give evidence in a case involving adultery.²⁸ Why would de la Motthe remain in port? However, he did leave soon after, as did the others, except for Levy. Did he then depart aboard the *St. Catrina*?

In Summary

Like de la Motthe, none of the twenty-three and none of those with de Lucena stayed very long in the province. Only Asser Levy of those on the *Peereboom* remained, and he died in New York in 1682. By 1664, seemingly none of the original 1654–1655 arrivals, except Levy, were present to see and accept the surrender to the English. These were not settlers. They did not seek to establish a community²⁹ but were drawn by possibilities of trade, the urging of the Amsterdam Jewish community, perhaps fear of plague in that city, and possibly the rhetoric of Dutch expansionists, such as Usselinx or Van der Donck. These few chose first to voyage to New Amsterdam but then to take their leave. The company also chose to surrender and leave. However, as a community, the Dutch inhabitants remained together with their property, customs, language,

and religion. The company's dreams and hopes were lost in the face of reality. For Jews, this was also an adventure that failed.

Many questions remain about the arrival of these first few. Why exactly did they choose 1654? Why not 1644 or 1638 or indeed any other year? Why choose this small, newly founded community at the edge of a vast, unknown wilderness? Was their decision by chance, choice, or both? What was the community's response to the refugees from Brazil or to those from Amsterdam? Unfortunately, those involved seemingly left no extant letters or journals or any account of their experience. Answers to questions raised by historians were far from the minds of participants. Still, with material now available, perhaps some reasonable assumptions can be made that might shed some light on a time long past. Perhaps, more evidence in Dutch archives will come forward, and some of these basic queries can be answered. Asser Levy came from Vilna and conducted business in Germany. What can be found in relevant records regarding Levy and other early arrivals? Obviously, it is important to do archival research and use primary sources where possible instead of depending on secondary information and stories. Using the Dutch name *St. Catrina* instead of the usually accepted French *St. Catherine* or *St. Charles* is a case in point.

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Notes

¹Ketel was probably the skipper since in April he had agreed to command the *Peereboom*, although Jacob Jansz Huys, in December 1654 while in New Amsterdam, agreed to sail the vessel to the West Indies. See Gemeente Archief Amsterdam Inv. fol. 145, April 25, 1654; Berthold Fernow, *The Records of New Amsterdam 1653–1674*, Volume 1, New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1897, pp. 274, 278 (hereinafter “*R.N.A.*”); Zvi Loker, *Jews in the Caribbean in Colonial Times* (Jerusalem-4 N.D.), p. 63; Teunis G. Bergen, “List of Early Immigrants to New Netherland,” *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Volume XIV, July, 1883, p. 181 (wrongly cites July 8, 1654, as the date of the arrival of *Peereboom*); Adriaen Van Laer translations of New York Colonial Manuscripts, Reel III, pp. 625–628, microfilm in the State Library, Albany, New York; Peter Padfield, *Tides of Empire*, Volume II, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1979, pp. 187, 233; Berthold Fernow, *Documents Relating to the History of Early Colonial Settlement*, Albany, New York: Weed Parsons and Co., 1883, pp. 315, 341, 484, 486, *passim* (hereinafter “*Colonial Settlement*”). The first mention of the name of the ship *St. Catrina* is in the original manuscript of the Records of New Amsterdam in the Municipal Archives, 31 Chambers Street, New York, although Fernow first translates the name as *St. Charles*, *R.N.A.*, pp. 240, 241, 244. Captain de la Motthe had written a petition in French. This does not confirm that the ship was French. There were many French-speaking Protestants (Huguenots and Walloons) in the Netherlands. There is no record of a *St. Catherine* in French archives (see Wiznitzer reference below).

²*R.N.A.*, Volume I, pp. 240-244; Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew 1492–1776*, Volume 1, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970, pp. 215, 216, *passim*; Samuel Oppenheim, *The Early History of the Jews in New York 1654–1664*, New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1909, pp. 37–43 (hereinafter “*Early History*”). Oppenheim believes there was a direct voyage of what he calls the *St. Charles* from Brazil. For a contrary view, see Arnold Wiznitzer, “The Exodus from Brazil to New Amsterdam of the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers 1654,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Volume XLIV, Philadelphia, 1954, pp. 88, 90 (hereinafter

"Exodus"), referring to the *St. Catherine* and a Caribbean voyage. Wiznitzer is very critical of Oppenheim. Egon and Frieda Wolff, "The Problem of the First Jewish Settlers in New Amsterdam 1654," *Studia Rosenthaliana*, Volume XV, August, 1981, pp. 176-177, strongly support the idea of a voyage from Surinam to New Amsterdam for the twenty-three Jews.

³Samual Oppenheim, "More About Jacob Barsimon, the First Jewish Settler in New York," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Volume XVIII, Philadelphia, 1910, pp. 39-44 (hereinafter "Jacob Barsimon"); Leo Hershkowitz, "New Amsterdam's Twenty-Three Jews — Myth or Reality," in *Hebrew and the Bible in America*, Shalom Goldman, ed., Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1993, pp. 172-173. The author finds no evidence to support the twenty-three figure. Wiznitzer cites his own publication of Recife's *Congregation Zur Israel* to support his assertion, but Levy does not appear on any such list. "Exodus," pp. 92-93; Arnold Wiznitzer, *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World*, New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1954, pp. 50-52; Arnold Wiznitzer, *Jews in Colonial Brazil*, New York, 1960, pp. 138, 176-177. They also find Levy in Brazil and one of the "twenty-three." For a list of immigrants into New Netherland, see "A List of Early Immigrants to New Netherland," New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, Volume XIV, New York, 1883, pp. 181-190. Aboaf and Barsimon are noted on pages 182-183.

⁴Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, Oxford, England: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 658; S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, Volume II, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916, pp. 144-152.

⁵*Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, Volume I, Hugh Hastings, ed., Albany, New York: James B. Lyon, State Printer, 1901-1916, pp. 335-336; Oppenheim, *Early History*, p. 2; H.S. van der Straaten, *Mawrits de Braziliaan*, Den Haag, the Netherlands: Van Soeren, 1998, p. 51. Translation and reference, as well as many helpful suggestions, are provided by Joep de Koning.

⁶There is an early account by Saul Mortera of a French ship rescuing the twenty-three from the hands of Spanish pirates. Often accepted by historians, this odd tale involving the *St. Catherine* or *St. Charles* has little substance. Wiznitzer, "Exodus," pp. 80-86, 89, 91.

⁷Isaac Da Costa, *Israel and Gentile*, London: J. Nisbet and Co., 1850, p. 449; Pierre M. Netscher, *Les Hollandais au Brésil*, The Hague: Belinfante Freres, 1853, p. 163.

⁸"Exodus," p. 86. Under Dutch law, Jews were considered, at least in part, as a separate entity governed by their own laws. But as citizens they were protected by Dutch law. Jacob A. Schiltkamp, *De Geschiedens van Het Notariaat in Het Octrooigebied van De West-Indische Compagnie*, S'Gravenhage, the Netherlands: H.L. Smits, 1964, pp. 175-181. I would like to thank Dr. Schiltkamp for his insight and helpful corrections in regard to this article.

⁹C. Ligtenberg, *Willem Usselinx*, Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1915 (Bijlage), p. cxvi. My thanks to Joep de Koning for this insightful information and translation. Amandus Johnson, *The Swedes on the Delaware 1638-1664*, Volume I, Philadelphia: International Printing Co., 1927, pp. 52-56. Angry at the company for not receiving proper recognition, Usselinx traveled to Sweden in 1624, where he met King Gustavus Adolphus and convinced him to establish a trading company in the New World. This expansion would not only defy Spanish power, but also add to the glory of Sweden even if on New Netherland property. Established was a short-lived New Sweden on the Delaware River. Herbert I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970, pp. 124, 125, 162.

¹⁰*A Description of the New Netherland*, Thomas F. O'Donnell, ed., Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1968, pp. xxxi-xxxxix.

¹¹A new unpublished translation of the Van der Donck book, *Description*, by Diederik Willem Goedhuys, is preferable to those that came before. A manuscript copy is in the writer's possession. I would like to thank Russell Shorto for a copy of the translation.

¹²Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 621, 625.

¹³F.J. Dubiez, *The Sephardi Community of Amsterdam* (C.F.L. Los, translator), Amsterdam: N.P. N.D., p. 5. For a thorough discussion of this subject, see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 51–75; Henri and Barbara van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, New York: Viking Press, 1978, pp. 246–250; Marcus, I, p. 228; Odette Vlessing, “The Portuguese-Jewish Merchant Community in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam,” in *Entrepreneurs & Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times*, Cle Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf, eds., Den Haag: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995, *passim*.

¹⁴Jonathan I. Israel, “The Jews of Dutch America,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., New York: Berghahn Books, 1997, pp. 341, 344; “Jacob Barsimon” *passim*; *The Jewish Experience in America*, Abraham J. Karp, ed., Volume I, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969, pp. 37–38; Van der Zee, p. 250.

¹⁵E.B. O’Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Volume I, Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1858, pp. 400–401 (hereinafter “*Documents Relative*”).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Volume II, pp. 234–237; C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire: 1600–1800*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965, p. 49; Simon Hart, *The Prehistory of the New Netherland Company*, Amsterdam: City of Amsterdam Press, 1959, p. 37; Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, *History of the City of New York in the Seventeenth Century*, Volume I, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909, p. 505.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 267, 268.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 279; *Year Book of the Holland Society*, New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1900, p. 174.

¹⁹Berthold Fernow, *Colonial Settlement*, Volume XIV, Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1883, p. 325. It is not known if or how many orphans were sent. In 1655, an Orphan Master Court was established in New Amsterdam. Berthold Fernow, *The Minutes of the Orphan Masters Court of New Amsterdam*, Volume I, New York: Francis P. Harber, 1902, pp. vi, vii.

²⁰Bloom, p. 126; Vlessing, pp. 224, 225, and 233.

²¹Isaac Emmanuel, “New Light on Early American Jewry,” *American Jewish Archives*, Volume VIII, January, 1955, p.15; Padfield, p. 7; Oppenheim, *Early History*, p. 13; Hershkovitz, “New Amsterdam’s Twenty-Three Jews,” pp. 176–177; “Jacob Barsimon,” pp. 38–39.

²²*Documents Relative*, Volume XIV, p. 315; Bloom, *Economic Activities*, p. 126; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, Volume I, pp. 218, 219.

²³Oppenheim, “Jacob Barsimon,” pp. 39, 40.

²⁴Hershkovitz, “New Amsterdam’s Twenty-Three Jews,” p. 176.

²⁵This view, stated by David De Sola Pool and accepted by the present congregation Shearith Israel, appears to have no basis in fact. David and Tamar De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, p. 3; Isaac S. Emmanuel, “New Light on Early American Jewry,” *American Jewish Archives*, Volume VIII, January, 1955, p. 17.

²⁶*R.N.A.*, Volume I, pp. 336, 360, 309. The skipper of the *Spotted Cow* appeared in court on August 9, 1655, brought there by Joseph d’Acosta seeking to recover claims on damaged goods “spoiled” in the vessel. Since the de Lucena group, including d’Acosta, arrived in New Amsterdam no later than March 1655, the *Spotted Cow* seems not to have been the vessel they used. Another vessel, the *Balance* from Amsterdam, arrived in mid-August 1655. The ship *Swarte Arent (Black Eagle)* was also in port from April to August 1655.

²⁷*R.N.A.*, Volume I, pp. 290–91, 313; *Documents Relative*, Volume XIV, p. 135.

²⁸*Ibid.*, Volume I, p. 298.

²⁹Hershkovitz, “New Amsterdam’s Twenty-Three Jews,” pp. 179–180; Hershkovitz, “Original Inventories of Early New York Jews (1682–1763),” *American Jewish History*, Volume XC, September, 2002, p. 244.

Dear Mrs. Cad: A Revolutionary War Letter of Rebecca Franks

Mark A. Stern

Life was splendid for Rebecca Franks during the winter and into the spring of 1777–1778. Washington’s rebels were immobilized at Valley Forge, improperly clothed and short of adequate food supplies. Winter set in, and British General Sir William Howe was content to enjoy the comforts of Philadelphia, which his army occupied. Some of the finest mansions in the city had been commandeered for Howe and his officers. They embarked upon an almost endless series of parties, galas, assemblies, and other social delights with the many young, pretty, charming, and affluent ladies of the city.¹

Miss Franks was certainly one of these. Renowned for her beauty, wit, and conversational acumen, she enjoyed close friendships with a coterie of the richest and prettiest girls in town: Betsy, Sarah, Mary, and Peggy Shippen; the Chew sisters, Mary, Elizabeth, and Peggy (who were of appropriate age among their family’s eleven girls); Williamina Bond; Nancy Redman; Mary White; and others.²

Upon settling in Philadelphia, Howe made a point to visit David Franks at his Woodford estate to establish a working relationship with the agent in charge of victuallizing the British Army in Pennsylvania and on the frontier. Franks was Rebecca’s father. The general was accompanied by his aides and top staff, including the dashing Major John André, who encountered Miss Franks and her friends. The encounter was pleasurable: All those handsome young men in their impressive officer uniforms and the beautiful young women responded instinctively. A pattern of daily visits ensued; even Howe took part. André drew sketches of the ladies and composed poetry. We have no evidence of how Mr. and Mrs. Franks liked the situation, but there was nothing wrong with finding a way to please your best customer.

David Franks had supplied the British troops as a cocontractor with his father, the late Jacob Franks of New York, who, in turn, fulfilled contractual requirements passed on from the firm of Arnold Nesbitt, Sir James Colebrook, Adam Drummond, Sir Samuel Fludyer, and Moses Franks of London.³ Moses Franks was also Jacob’s son and David’s brother. The business arrangement had been in force since the conclusion of the French and Indian War.⁴

David Franks’s parents, Jacob and Bilhah Abigail Levy Franks,⁵ were Jews whose families had migrated from Germany to England. Leaving brothers behind in London, Jacob came to America and settled in New York in 1708 or 1709. He prospered, met and married Abigail, and raised a family of three sons

and four daughters who lived to adulthood. Three other siblings died as young children. Jacob was a pious Jew and joined with others to build Kahal Kadosh Shearith Israel, the first Jewish congregation in New York, in 1728. Until his death in 1769, he was a pillar of the synagogue, serving as *parnas* seven times and in other leadership roles continually.

Jacob and Abigail sent their two oldest sons, Naphtali and Moses, back to England to learn the merchandising business and to establish themselves. Both succeeded handsomely and married first cousins, retaining solid Jewish bonds within the family. After a brief attempt to form a partnership with his brother Moses, David moved to Philadelphia and, in 1742, commenced his business life as a merchant by joining in partnership with his mother's brother, uncle Nathan Levy.

The year before, tragedy had struck the Franks family when David's older sister, Phila, eloped with the Anglican Oliver DeLancey, Jr., whose family was powerful both politically and socially in New York. Jacob and Abigail were devastated.⁶ Both rationalized the episode because DeLancey was from a solid background and was, in fact, a partner with John Watts in the victuallizing firm that served New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts under contract with Jacob Franks. Despite these positive elements, they did not see or speak with Phila for a year. Later, both contemplated separate meetings with her, but normal relations were never achieved.

Compounding this agony, in 1743, David married Margaret Evans, daughter of Peter Evans, who was a high-level official in the Philadelphia city government and a leading parishioner at Christ Church, the city's Anglican church. David's parents were further upset as all of David's children were raised as Protestants; except for Rebecca, all were baptized at Christ Church.⁷ But a strange phenomenon emerged: Despite her upbringing and despite her mother's devoted church attendance and connection to Christ Church, Rebecca became known as the "Jewish belle" of Philadelphia — a consequence of her father's faith and its indelible stamp.

Over the years since then, there are numerous references to Rebecca as a Jewess. In 1893, Anne Hollingsworth Wharton referred to her as "the beautiful Jewess"⁸ The following year, the Jewish scholar Max J. Kohler authored a twenty-seven-page monograph devoted to her that states, "We find Rebecca constantly referred to in contemporary and later papers as a Jewess."⁹ That same year, Henry S. Morais devoted several pages to Rebecca in a book titled *The Jews of Philadelphia*.¹⁰ Nearly a century later, a collection of essays on Jewish life in Philadelphia explains that her father was one of the original subscribers to the Philadelphia Dancing Assembly and that "Rebecca Franks was one of the most popular belles of Revolutionary society in the city."¹¹ One of the most comprehensive histories of Philadelphia discusses "Miss Rebecca Franks, the Jewish belle of the city."¹² In 1997, we read "On the other hand, David Franks,

Philadelphia's leading Jewish merchant, was a die-hard loyalist whose daughter Rebecca was the belle of the Philadelphia social scene."¹³ After forty-one years of marriage to an Anglican baronet, her death was recorded under "Jewish Obituary Notices" in the *Gentlemen's Magazine of Great Britain*.¹⁴

In 1780, David Franks was expelled from Pennsylvania despite a series of trials in which he was consistently found innocent of treason.¹⁵ He and Rebecca were ordered to go beyond the battle lines and not return to the state until after the war was over. They moved to New York City. Two years later, Rebecca married Colonel Henry Johnson of the British Army, who had been captured and kept from battle during the final stages of the war. Soon after their wedding, with the war ended, Johnson was sent back to England and the couple settled in Bath. Not long after, he was promoted to major general and assigned as governor of Ross Castle in New Ross (near Wexford), Ireland. Rebecca accompanied him there, and it was during their stay that she wrote the letter shown here.

Rebecca's friend (and her mother's first cousin) Willie Bond had married one of Washington's most admired officers, Gen. John Cadwalader. The women corresponded, although only one sample of their letters has surfaced. That letter, from Rebecca to Willie, expresses many of the frustrations Rebecca endured from her withdrawal from Philadelphia and its frothy days of 1777–1778. The letter provides an unusually perceptive and historically interesting view of relationships between a number of fairly well-known, affluent English and American subjects at the conclusion of the War for Independence.

The letter sends many messages to the contemporary reader. First, Rebecca Franks had no difficulty taking sides on any issue and would have been an interesting young woman in the twenty-first century. She yearned for social recognition, fed upon it, and invited her correspondents to reinforce her opinions and biases. She was very partial to her good friends and often contemptuous of those she either disliked or envied.

Years later, Rebecca was reported to have regretted her Tory leanings, expressing the thought that she should have been a patriot.¹⁶ More likely, Rebecca really lamented her separation from 1778 Philadelphia and the joys and excitements of those days filled with endless parties, dances, and gatherings with her closest friends. Life as the wife of a general and baronet never quite achieved the same level of intensity she had enjoyed at Woodford.

One other strong message delivered in the letter shows that the lines between Whig and Tory and loyalist and revolutionary were blurred significantly. Close friends and relatives functioned on both sides without intruding greatly upon their personal relationships. Rebecca had been exposed broadly to Tory/loyalist individuals and groups all of her life, yet she maintained comfortable and affectionate relationships with many pro-revolutionaries and had close friends whose husbands were continental congressmen or officers in

Washington's army. Benedict Arnold was one of Washington's top generals when Peggy Shippen married him, which made not the slightest difference to Rebecca and Peggy's friendship. Nancy Paca's husband was a Maryland congressman, and Peggy Chew's husband was governor of Maryland. Rebecca enjoyed endearing friendships with both. William Tilghman ended his career as chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court after many years in public service but remained Rebecca's "old flirt" Billy. Willie Bond's brother exiled himself to England throughout the war to shield his Tory feelings, while her husband was one of Washington's most trusted generals. Cadwalader fought a duel taking Washington's side in a suspected plot to overthrow him as commander-in-chief.¹⁷

All of Rebecca's cousins and other relatives tilted toward the British side, and she married a British colonel. At the same time, her father obtained authority from the Continental Congress to victualize British prisoners in a half-dozen jails throughout the northeastern colonies.¹⁸ Clearly, social standing and personal affection superseded political leanings before, during, and after the war. True, many loyalists were punished severely after hostilities ended, but not by their friends or relatives.

Reproduction and annotation of the letter follows.*

February 19, 1784

Killernah¹⁹

Dear Mrs. Cad²⁰

The night before last I had the satisfaction of hearing from you, a pleasure I wish much more frequently I could enjoy. But the vile sea — how much happiness does it deprive us of — but most willingly wou'd I encounter its dangers to visit Phila[delphia] again — but alas — I fear I never can hope for that ALL your eloquence will not prevail while he can he will stay, either in Ireland (where we are now) or England, and his wife must obey.²¹

I couldn't help smiling at that part of yr letter that so gravely reprobates grandeur & dissipation — you are indeed consum'd Old Lady — now if I who have it not in my power to enjoy such things — was to rail against them the world might excuse me — but in you who have all the rich gifts of fortune 'tis laughable really²² — Becky²³ tells me you are again in for the plate [that is, pregnant], poor Toad. Why don't you follow your Mother's wise example — she always contrived matters so as only to be that way once in 7 years. Billy Hamilton²⁴ once made a speech at Dr. Smith's the day you din'd there as a Bride which you have fully versified — do you recollect it — I dare not trust it on paper — I can tell you very little of yr American acquaintances in London as I left the place last August & indeed when there I knew very little of them except Mrs. Arnold²⁵ who always behav'd more like an affect-te sister than a common friend, she still continues the same. I hear every week or fortnight from her, she expects to be confin'd the beginning of next Month,²⁶

she's a true Francs in that particular — she was & is still more noticed and more liked than any American that ever came over. She is visited by people of the first rank & invited to all their houses²⁷ — As for Mrs. R Penn²⁸ she is and ever will be the Master²⁹ — No alteration except if possible she is larger & hoarser than ever — her sister³⁰ is thought pretty — but I do not hear of her having any particular admirers — I saw very little of them while in London — Mrs. P was too violent an American to have any intimacy with a British officer's wife — she is lately lain of a son — Mrs. Bingham³¹ arriv'd but a little while before I left London & while I was confin'd³² so did not see either her or Mrs. Hare.³³

The former spent part of the Summer at Brighthelmstone where she was much admired in London She is not known & I hear has had but six ladys to visit her since her arrival.³⁴ At first she talk'd of going to court and living away at a great rate but that Idea is now quite thrown aside & she finds an American in London & an American in their own country quite different beings. Mrs. Arnold is the only one who has been the least Notic'd — I can tell you nothing of yr British acquaintances — I've seen more since I came to Ireland — Col. [undecipherable]³⁵ is still in Canada — so is Colin Campbell³⁶ & married to a very beautiful woman — a Daughter of Guy Johns[t]on's³⁷ — Remember me to General and Mrs. Dickinson³⁸ — Col and Mrs Cad³⁹ — & all the rest of yr acquaintances — I blow your Spouse a kiss and mine blows you one at the same time — I've not heard from [illegible] — as I write to Becky I say nothing to her of that branch of your familie — When you receive this may you be happily fix'd in D—r Phila. Which in spite of Everything I shall always prefer to every other place — Advise & tell me soon that you have given General C another son⁴⁰ — kiss those you have already for your Sincerely Affecte

B Johnson

If you see B. Tilghman⁴¹ tell him his old Flirt sends her love to him —

*Reprinted with permission from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Cadwalader Collection (#1454), Series 3X, Box 71, Williamina Bond Correspondence, Letter B. Johnson to Williamina B. Cadwalader, February 19, 1784.

The Huntington Library, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Beverly Hills Public Library, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, and the Frances Henry Library at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles all provided essential archival materials for this work. Additionally, Professor William Pencak of the Pennsylvania State University gave valuable guidance and inspiration, which are much appreciated.

After thirty-eight years as an engineer in the aerospace business and sixteen years restoring concert grand pianos, Mark Abbott Stern found his true passion in the history of Colonial Jewish America. At long distance, William Pencak has mentored his research within the Franks family, and a biography of Rebecca's father, David, nears completion.

Notes

¹Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia, A History of the City and Its People: A Record of 225 Years*, Volume 1, Philadelphia: S.J. Clarke, 1912, pp. 272–277.

²Randolph Shipley Klein, *Portrait of an Early American Family; The Shippens of Pennsylvania Across Five Generations*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975, pp. 185, 190–193, 305–306.

³Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957, p. 38.

⁴Sidney Meshulam Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz: Their Lives and Times*, Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1994, p. 49.

⁵Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore S. Meyer, *The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Colonial Correspondence: Letters of the Franks Family (1733–1748)*, Waltham, Massachusetts: American Jewish Historical Society, 1968, *passim*.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 116–122.

⁷Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews*, p. 33.

⁸Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, *Through Colonial Doorways*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1893, p. 212.

⁹Max J. Kohler, *Rebecca Franks: An American Jewish Belle of the Last Century*, New York: Philip Cowen, 1894, p. 9.

¹⁰Henry S. Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: Levytype Co., 1894, pp. 36–37.

¹¹Murray Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940*, Philadelphia: Ishi Publications/Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983, p. 291.

¹²Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia*, Volume 1, p. 276.

¹³Benson Bobrick, *Angel in the Whirlwind*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997, p. 315.

¹⁴*Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society (PAJHS)*, Volume 37, 1947, p. 419.

¹⁵*American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century*, Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., American Jewish Archives Publication, No. 3. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1959, pp. 30, 241–260.

¹⁶Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, LLD, *Memoirs of Lieut.-General Scott, LLD*, Volume 1, New York: Sheldon, 1864, pp. 171–174.

¹⁷Gregory A. Stiverson and Phebe R. Jacobsen, *William Paca*, Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1976, pp. 80–81; Rebecca Franks to Abigail Hamilton, August 10, 1781, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB)*, Volume 23, pp. 303–309; John Golder, *Life of William Tilghman*, Philadelphia: Thomas Town, 1829, pp. 12–15; Joanne Loewe Neel, *Phineas Bond: A Study in Anglo-American Relations 1786–1812*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968, p. 17; Charles P. Keith, *Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania 1733–1776*, Philadelphia: W.S. Sharp Printing Co., 1883, p. 375; *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, Richard K. Showman, ed., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983, pp. 56–57; Gen. Nathanael Greene to Gen. John Cadwalader, November 10, 1778, *Correspondence of Nathanael Greene*, Volume 3, p. 56; Cadwalader to Greene, December 5, 1778, *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁸*Minutes of the Continental Congress*, 21 May 1776.

¹⁹Killarney, Ireland.

²⁰“Mrs. Cad” was Williamina Bond Cadwalader, daughter of Dr. Phineas and Williamina Moore Bond and, later, the second wife of Gen. John Cadwalader. She was born 26 February 1753 and died 9 September 1837. In her single days, she was known as “Willie Bond” and was an attractive and popular young woman. She and Rebecca Franks were both ladies of the Mischianza celebration, which honored the retirement of General Howe. The fourteen ladies were selected by Maj. John André as the “foremost in youth, beauty and fashion” in the Philadelphia social scene. It was André and Oliver DeLancey, Jr., who organized the event.

Horace Wemyss Smith, *Life and Correspondence of the Rev. William Smith, D.D.*, New York: Arno Press, 1972 (reprint), Volume 2, Appendix xii, pp. 541–543; J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia 1609–1884*, Volume I, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1884, pp. 377–381.

²¹Rebecca Franks (1758–1823) was born and raised in Philadelphia and enjoyed a young womanhood of exceptional social prominence and attention. She had endless “beaux” and appears to have never tired of parties, social gatherings, and flirtations. Her father enjoyed contracts with the British government for more than twenty years requiring that he provide food and other supplies to British troops in the colonies. When the British army occupied Philadelphia in the fall of 1777, the social whirl commenced for British officers and local Tory ladies, which lasted until Howe’s departure in the spring of 1778. That year is in the background of memories that lingered with Rebecca and roused such nostalgia for Philadelphia.

Wharton, *Through Colonial Doorways*, pp. 14, 18, 23–64; Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew 1492–1776*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970, Volume 2, p. 716.

On 17 January 1782, Rebecca and Colonel Johnson were married. Their move to England and thence to Ireland followed. There, Rebecca dwelt without close friends in a musty old castle and, clearly, pined for her life back in Pennsylvania. Moreover, she lay the blame for her frustration at the feet of her new husband. Four years later, with Rebecca comfortably ensconced at Bath, Johnson directed the defense of New Ross against the Irish rebel army and was instrumental in stopping the rebel advance and turning the tide of the war in the southern region. The following year, with the rebellion suppressed, the new viceroy and commander-in-chief, Lord Cornwallis, removed him from the post and expressed the opinion that Johnson was a “wrong-headed blockhead.” In later years, Johnson was promoted to general and created a baronet.

Burke’s Peerage and Baronetage, Peter Townsend, ed., London: Burke’s Peerage, 1963, p. 1323; *PMHB*, Volume 3, pp. 150–166; Daniel Gahan, *The People’s Rising — Wexford 1798*, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1995, pp. 121–141; Charles Ross, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, London: J. Murray, 1859, Volume 3, p. 116.

²²Rebecca chides Willie Bond for complaining about “grandeur and dissipation,” which were apparently discussed in her earlier letter and refer to the Philadelphia/Delaware social scene in which she was prominent. Rebecca wants Willie to feel sorry for her current plight away from parties and balls and the intense social life she had enjoyed as a girl in Philadelphia and in London before the transfer.

²³“Becky” was Rebecca Cadwalader (1746–1816), one of the six daughters (one died in infancy) of Dr. Thomas Cadwalader and a sister of both Col. Lambert Cadwalader and Gen. John Cadwalader, and Willie Bond’s husband.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, p. 374.

²⁴“Billy Hamilton” was William Hamilton (1745–1813), younger brother of Andrew Hamilton of “Woodlands,” who was married to Rebecca’s older sister, Abigail. Billy and Rebecca had grown up as neighbors and childhood friends and, later, as flirtatious teens. Billy had a penchant for public speaking and delivered lengthy English verses at the 1759 commencement exercises at the College of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) when Rev. William Smith was building the school’s reputation. Billy was fourteen years old at the time. He also delivered a tribute at Willie’s and the general’s wedding, to which Rebecca alludes. Billy Hamilton was exiled from the colonies on the same day that Rebecca’s father suffered identical punishment for alleged crimes against the revolution. At the end of the trials, both men were found innocent of all charges.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, pp. 135–136; Smith, *Life and Correspondence*, Volume 1, pp. 210–213; Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Volume XII, pp. 495, 499.

²⁵“Mrs. Arnold” was the former Peggy Shippen, who had married General Benedict Arnold before his desertion and subsequent exile and who moved to England with him in 1781. Peggy and Rebecca had been best friends as girls and young women and continued to correspond after the war ended. *PMHB*, Volume 25, pp. 29–41; James Thomas Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy*, New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1953, p. 318.

²⁶Rebecca used the term “confin’d” to describe the physical restrictions imposed by advanced stages of pregnancy.

²⁷As in Philadelphia, social relationships were bound and reinforced in England by mutual visits between ladies and gentlemen as well. Visits usually included tea service and some kind of snacks and were the means of acknowledging friendship or, very often, deference and respect, for the hostess. Great numbers and high status of visitors indicated very high social esteem whereas the lack of visitors would be read as social weakness or failure. It was not unusual for individuals to make frequent, repeated visits to leaders of the social circle. Rebecca observes the success enjoyed by Peggy Shippen Arnold almost proudly. This is her best friend, and she is delighted by Peggy’s reception in London society.

Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia*, Volume 1, p. 387.

²⁸“Mrs. R. Penn” was Mary (Polly) Masters Penn (1756–1829), wife of Richard Penn (1735–1811), who was the younger brother of Pennsylvania Governor John Penn. Richard came to Pennsylvania from England in 1763 and obtained, through his brother’s largesse, a series of administrative positions in which he served until 1769. He returned to England but shortly thereafter was offered the position of lieutenant governor, for which he returned to America in 1771. Two years later, having been replaced by his brother, he again moved to England, where he stayed most of the remainder of his life. Though part of the prestigious Penn family, Richard never enjoyed the social advantages of his wealthier and more highly placed relatives.

During those last two years in America, Richard met and married Polly Masters (May 1772). On their wedding day, he was thirty-seven years old and she was sixteen. Polly’s father, William Masters, died when she was just four years old, leaving his widow, Mary Lawrence Masters, with two daughters, a considerable fortune, and much real property. Over the next several years, Mrs. Masters had a house built that she gave to Polly and Richard Penn as a wedding gift. The Penns, Mrs. Masters, and her other daughter, Sarah, spent the war years in England, where they remained until this letter was written. The house in Philadelphia went through a succession of famous occupants, including General Howe, Benedict Arnold, French Consul John Holker, Robert Morris, and George Washington.

Rebecca shows some dislike for Polly Penn but fails to go into detail about the origins of those feelings.

PMHB, Volume 22, pp. 71–97; *ibid.* Volume 16, p. 96; *ibid.* Volume 16, p. 46; *ibid.* Volume 8, pp. 279–299; *ibid.* Volume 22, p. 88.

²⁹A play on words due to Polly’s maiden name.

³⁰Polly’s sister, Sarah Masters (1758–1825), comes in for some negative comment regarding her lack of suitors. Eleven years later, Sarah Masters married Turner Camac, scion of one of the oldest Irish families, who possessed extensive land and a copper mine. The couple moved to Pennsylvania, where Camac managed the farmlands Sarah had inherited from her parents.

William Masters Camac, *Memoirs of the Camacs of County Down, With Some Account of Their Predecessors, in One Volume, to Which Is Added Brief Sketches of Some of the Families With Whom They Intermarried*, Philadelphia: W.M. Camac, 1913, pp. 100–126.

³¹“Mrs. Bingham” was Ann Willing Bingham (1764–1801), the reigning queen of Philadelphia society and regarded by many as the most beautiful woman in the colonies and in Europe as well. Her husband, William Bingham (1752–1804), was probably the richest man in America from banking and land speculation successes. At their wedding in 1780, William was twenty-eight and Ann was sixteen. In May 1783, the Binghams went to London for a combined business and pleasure trip that lasted three years and included visits to the continent. Ann

delivered her second child in December 1783 during the stay. In later years, Ann was admired as an exceptionally charming hostess. Bingham built a huge mansion, which became the hub of society in Philadelphia. It has been said that Washington and Jefferson were in Bingham's social set rather than the reverse.

Ann Bingham was not one of Rebecca's closest friends, but they were surely acquainted through various connections.

PMHB, Volume 61, pp. 286–324; Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia*, Volume 1, pp. 383–384.

³²Rebecca alludes to having been “confin’d” during 1783. The first of her two sons, Henry Allen Johnson, was born in September 1785, fully nineteen months after this letter was written. Very likely, Rebecca suffered a miscarriage, although there is no recording in extant letters.

Burke's Peerage, p. 1323; Hershkovitz and Meyer, *Friedman Collection*, p. 129n.

³³“Mrs. Hare” was Margaret (Peggy) Willing Hare (1753–1816), daughter of Charles and Ann Shippen Willing and a first cousin of Ann Willing Bingham. Though eleven years her senior, she appears to have enjoyed a close personal association with Ann Willing. Peggy's husband was Robert Hare (1752–1810), owner of one of the major breweries in the colonies, whose porter was sought from great distances. George Washington sent his carriage from Virginia to pick up a supply. Later, he wrote from New York City (through Clement Biddle, who handled distribution for Hare) and from Mount Vernon to have shipments made to him. After the brewery burned down in 1790, Hare served in the Pennsylvania State Senate alongside William Bingham.

The Hares traveled to England together with the Bingham in May 1783 and were quartered close to each other. The Hares returned to America much earlier than the Bingham. Rebecca had enjoyed the same social circles as the Hares prior to her marriage, and they were well acquainted.

Smith, *Life and Correspondence*, Volume 2, p. 150; Stanley Wade Baron, *Brewed in America*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1962, pp. 59, 109, 114–117; *The Pennsylvania Manual*, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Volume 88, p. 512; *PMHB*, Volume 61, pp. 288–289.

³⁴The reference to a paucity of visitors was an outright put-down of Ann Bingham — there is a touch of enjoyment in the telling. However, three or four years later, this assessment could not have been leveled, as Mrs. Bingham became, after her return to America, the very epicenter of Philadelphia society.

³⁵Possibly “Hope,” although no Colonel Hope is mentioned in other Franks family documents.

³⁶Colin Campbell (1754–1814), a Scot, entered the British Army as an ensign in March 1771 and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1774. He accompanied the 71st Regiment of Foot to America and, while stationed in New York, married Mary, the eldest daughter of Col. Guy Johns[t]on. Very likely, he and Henry Johnson served together in the New York/New Jersey area during the war. In later years, Campbell achieved the rank of lieutenant general and became lieutenant governor of Gibraltar.

Directory of National Biography, Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., New York: Macmillan, 1908, Volume 3, pp. 801–802; *Burke's Peerage*, p. 419.

³⁷Sir William Johnson (1715–1774), a British subject, came to America in 1738 and established himself in the Mohawk Valley, where he earned the respect and admiration of the Mohawk Indian tribe who elected him a sachem. Governor George Clinton appointed him superintendent of Indian Affairs with the Six Iroquois Nations. His nephew, Guy Johns[t]on (1740–1788), was taken under Sir William's wing and trained for diplomatic service with the Indians. Guy married Sir William's daughter Mary (Polly) in 1763 and, upon Sir William's death, received the appointment to replace him as superintendent of Indian Affairs. (Both spellings of “Johns[t]on” appear in records of the family and were apparently used interchangeably.)

A loyalist during the war, Guy Johns[t]on fled to Canada in 1775. During the trip, his wife died in childbirth. An older daughter married Colin Campbell. David Franks's extensive activity in the fur trade with George Croghan, William Murray, and others had brought him into frequent contact with both Sir William and Guy and accounts for Rebecca's knowledge of the families.

Burke's Peerage, pp. 419, 1325; *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, Albany: Division of Archives and History, University of the State of New York, 1921–1965, Volume 1, pp. xxxv–xxxviii.

³⁸Gen. Philemon Dickinson (1739–1809) and his first wife, Mary Cadwalader Dickinson (1744–1791). Mary was a first cousin of Gen. John Cadwalader, Willie Bond's husband, and intimate within Rebecca's social circle. Mary was the older sister of General Dickinson's second wife, Rebecca (Becky), with whom Rebecca Franks maintained a correspondence. The second marriage post-dated this letter.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, pp. 374, 390–391; W. Jay Mills, *Historic Houses of New Jersey*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1902, pp. 270–276; *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, Volume 3, Boston: The Biographical Society, 1904, p. 247.

³⁹Col. Lambert Cadwalader (1743–1823) and Mary McCall Cadwalader (1760–?). Colonel Cadwalader, though just a year younger, was a nephew of Gen. John Cadwalader, and Mary McCall was from one of the most prominent families in the community.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, pp. 374, 387–389.

⁴⁰Willie Bond did in fact give the general another son, John, born May 1, 1784. Unfortunately, the baby lived only fourteen months and died on July 10, 1785.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, p. 377.

⁴¹"B. Tilghman" is William Tilghman (1756–1827), who was born in Maryland. The family moved to Philadelphia when he was six years old, and he grew up in the Philadelphia/Germantown milieu. He attended the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) and studied law under Benjamin Chew. Chew had eleven daughters (one passed away in infancy), several of whom were close friends of Rebecca Franks. Margaret Oswald Chew (known as Peggy Chew, one of the ladies of the Mischianza and a favorite of Major André) was one of these and was among Rebecca's best friends. Tilghman spent a lot of time with the Chew girls, and Rebecca and they were very close friends.

Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, pp. 409–412.

An Eighteenth Century Hebrew *Lu'ah* from Pennsylvania

Jonathan D. Sarna

Jewish religious life revolves around Jewish time — time measured according to the complex lunar-solar calendar of the Jewish people. One needs a Jewish calendar, or *lu'ah*, to know when Jewish holidays are to be celebrated, what time the Sabbath begins and ends, when to memorialize the dead, and even when to say morning and evening prayers. The first printed Jewish calendar in America appeared in 1806: Moses Lopez's *A Lunar Calendar, of the Festivals, and Other Days in the Year, Observed by the Israelites, Commencing Anno Mundi, 5566, and Ending in 5619, being a Period of 54 Years, Which by the Solar Computation of Times, Begins September 24th 1805, and will End the 28th of the Same Month, in the Year 1859* (Newport, 1806). Thereafter, they appear quite regularly.¹

Prior to 1806, Jewish calendars in North America were handwritten. Several are extant, including one written for Joseph Simon, the famous Lancaster, Pennsylvania, merchant.² Now another *lu'ah* has come to light, found in the private collection of Arnold and Dee Kaplan of Allentown, Pennsylvania. It is at once typical of traditional Jewish calendars written in German lands and also unique.

This handwritten *lu'ah*, several images from which are printed in the color insert found in the back of this volume, courtesy of the Kaplans, covers the year 5539 of the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to the year 1778–79. The author of the *lu'ah* was Abraham Eleazer Cohen, who identifies himself on the cover. The cover likewise mentions Philadelphia in large print, indicating that the *lu'ah* was written there. However, during the course of 1779, several prominent Jews fled Philadelphia for Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to escape the British occupation; the *lu'ah* may have traveled with them. This would explain why the cover also seems to mention Lancaster in small faded Hebrew print vertically on the left side. The fact that this *lu'ah* was produced in the midst of the American Revolution underscores the calendar's importance for the proper observance of Jewish religious life and makes this document particularly significant.

Cohen died in February 1785 in Philadelphia. He was a schoolmaster and the *shamash* (beadle) for Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia in 1783. During his tenure at Mikveh Israel, he offered to provide private Hebrew lessons, a sign of his superior Jewish education. In his will, he described himself as a “schoolmaster” and left fifty pounds to the synagogue.³

Cohen's *lu'ah* contains four lines of text on its inside cover that are written in another hand than the *lu'ah* itself. This Hebrew text, which is in a cursive script, may be translated as follows:

Rachel, wife of the master (*g'vir*)
Jacob, son of Joshua
Cohen, of Oppenheim⁴ (?)
For good deeds, Amen.

This would seem to be a dedication to the recipient of the *lu'ah*. Perhaps that recipient was Rachel Jacobs (Polack), the second wife of Jacob I. Cohen (known in Hebrew as Jacob son of Joshua.)⁵ If so, the dedication would have been composed no earlier than November 3, 1807, when that couple was married. Professor Elisheva Carlebach, who has examined hundreds of these calendars, reports that this is the first she has seen that is “clearly intended to be used by a woman.”⁶ Women needed calendars, among other reasons, to punctiliously observe the laws of *niddah* (menstrual purity).

Rabbi Mordechai and Caren Torczyner of Congregation Sons of Israel, Allentown, Pennsylvania, have analyzed this *lu'ah*⁷ and suggest that its author is a man of some learning who knows the laws of the Jewish calendar well.⁸ For example, the *lu'ah* takes into account the *tekufah*, the solstice, which marks the division of the seasons for the religious calendar. It also documents the *molad*, the time when the new moon is “born.” In the month of Heshvan (which usually falls in October–November), it gives this *molad* not only in hours and minutes but also with the traditional number of parts (*halakim*) of three and one-third seconds each (there are 1,080 *halakim* in an hour). The number provided, however, is erroneous, suggesting that this tradition had by then been lost (which may also explain why *halakim* are not supplied for other months). In addition, the *lu'ah* lists the weekly Torah portion (sometimes misspelled), the secular date that correlates with the Hebrew date, and of course, all Jewish holidays. While many a manuscript *lu'ah* from Germany also list selected Christian holidays, such as Christmas and some saints days — which affected business and sometimes drove Jews indoors — this one does not, implying that it was used exclusively for religious purposes.

The discovery of this *lu'ah* extends our understanding of the religious lives of early American Jews. It serves as a reminder that those pioneers, remote as they were from the European centers of Jewish life, nevertheless found ways, such as through handwritten Jewish calendars, to preserve Jewish time.

Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna, Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History in the Department of Near Eastern & Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, is one of America's foremost commentators on American Jewish history, religion, and life. Born in Philadelphia and raised in New York and Boston, he attended Brandeis University, the Boston Hebrew College, Merkaz HaRav Kook in Jerusalem, and Yale University, where he obtained his doctorate in 1979. Dr. Sarna has written, edited, or coedited more than twenty books. His most recent work is the acclaimed *American Judaism: A History*. Winner of the Jewish Book Council's "Jewish Book of the Year Award" in 2004, it has been praised as being "the single best description of American Judaism during its 350 years on American soil."

Notes

¹Robert Singerman, *Judaica Americana: A Bibliography of Publications to 1900*, New York: Greenwood, 1990, index s.v. "Calendar."

²The *lu'ah* prepared for Joseph Simon for 5537 (1776–1777) is found at the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, ms. 59. My thanks to Professor Elisheva Carlebach for this reference and for other invaluable comments on the significance of the Kaplan's *lu'ah*. On Joseph Simon, see David Brener, *The Jews of Lancaster, Pennsylvania*, Lancaster: 1979, esp. 9–19.

³Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975, pp. 124, 141, 421 n136.

⁴Based on a reading of dalet, alef, peh, heh, which is a standard Hebrew abbreviation for Oppenheim. By the late eighteenth century, the Jewish community of Oppenheim numbered less than ten, but Jews with roots in Oppenheim often added "from Oppenheim" to their names. See S. Ashkenazi and D. Jarden, *Ozar Rashe Tevot*, Jerusalem: 1978, and "Oppenheim," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., 2007, 15:442–43. An alternate reading would be "leḥuppah" (lamed, het, vav, peh, heh), implying that the book is a wedding gift, but this woman is clearly described as "the wife of," which indicates that she is already married.

⁵On Cohen, see Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jacob I. Cohen," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* 3, Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2006, 345–347.

⁶Elisheva Carlebach to Jonathan D. Sarna, May 14, 2007, copy at American Jewish Archives.

⁷A detailed analysis of the *lu'ah*, by the Torczyner, is available at the Marcus Center.

⁸For a survey of the laws of the calendar, see Ephraim J. Wiesenber, "Calendar," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., 2007, 4: 354–58.



Following an elaborate ordination service at the Plum Street Temple, guests transferred to one of Cincinnati's most famous elegant banquet locations, The Highland House. Atop Mt. Adams and overlooking the Ohio River, the Highland House was both a prestigious and beautiful venue for the great banquet. Unfortunately, the Highland House was subsequently torn down.
(Courtesy Cincinnati Historical Society)

The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism*

Lance J. Sussman

On July 11, 1883, one of the great landmark events in the history of Judaism in the United States took place at Cincinnati's Highland House overlooking the Ohio River.¹ The "Trefa Banquet" or "Highland House Affair" is, perhaps, Reform Judaism's most widely known faux pas but also one of its least-studied occurrences.² Often invoked against classical Reform Judaism both from within and from outside the Reform movement, the Trefa Banquet can also be understood both as a cautionary tale and an object lesson for Judaism's most liberal religious movement.³ By exploring the Trefa Banquet more thoroughly, placing it into its historical context, and reexamining the chain of events that followed it, we can also learn a great deal about Judaism in America, then and now.⁴

Viewed from the perspective of its own time, the well-known Cincinnati repast of July 1883 was closely patterned after the grand banquet style of American culinary culture in an age of excess. Within the continuum of Reform Jewish history, the Trefa Banquet's pork-free menu reflected a broader culinary pattern of select *kashrut* — that is, Jewish religious dietary practice — among nineteenth century American Jews. It also represented a midpoint between the general compliance with traditional *kashrut* at public events that characterized American Reform Judaism until the 1870s and a radical break with *kashrut* that increasingly characterized mainstream Reform beginning in the early 1880s. The radicalization of Reform food policy was occasioned by general trends in American culinary culture, upward socioeconomic mobility among American Reform Jews, and the influence of religious modernism on the Reform movement. Remarkably, Reform food policy largely remained radicalized until the end of the twentieth century when, for the first time in more than a century, the possibility of returning to select traditional dietary practices was brought up for serious discussion and review.

As is well known, the radicalization of Reform food policy in the 1880s also served as an accelerant in the formation of the nascent Conservative movement. At the same time, *kashrut* issues among newly arrived east European Jews resulted in their establishing numerous social service institutions to regulate *kashrut*. Ironically and sadly, a celebration in honor of the first ordination class of the Hebrew Union College (HUC), which was supposed to signal a new era of intrafaith cooperation among American Jews, instead proved to be a call to arms and contributed to the permanent factionalization of American Jewish religious life.

Historiography: The Myth of the Trefa Banquet

For many years following the Highland House Affair, the memory of the Trefa Banquet apparently remained alive at the grass-roots level but did not attract scholarly attention. In his 1941 autobiography, *My Life as an American Jew*, David Philipson, a member of the first HUC ordination class and an eyewitness to the banquet, published an account of the dinner that was replete with misinformation and strong personal opinion. However, Philipson's "memory" of the dinner became the codified text on what had occurred nearly sixty years earlier. In Philipson's account, "terrific excitement ensued when two rabbis rose from their seats and rushed from the room. Shrimp had been placed before them as the opening course of the elaborate menu."⁵ In fact, contemporaneous reports of the dinner do not fully substantiate that the dinner had been dramatically disrupted. For sure, shrimp was not served as the first course; rather, it was littleneck clams!

Philipson also appended a historical thesis of his own. "This incident," he opined, "furnished the opening to the movement that culminated in the establishment of a rabbinical seminary of a Conservative birth."⁶ While perhaps slightly overstated, Philipson's observation helped nurture a rich historiographical tradition in American Jewish history that, in particular, looked at the founding of the first Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York and the rise of the largest Jewish denomination in the United States for most of the twentieth century.

While Philipson's facts were slightly revised by memory and, perhaps, a little embellished, his thesis concerning the place of the Trefa Banquet in American Jewish history eventually attracted serious scholarly attention. In 1966, Professor John J. Appel published a historical analysis of the Trefa Banquet in *Commentary* magazine. Appel concluded that the inclusion of shrimp, crab, and clams on the menu of the Trefa Banquet was not a caterer's error but reflected the "ambivalent, sometimes contradictory attitude" of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise toward *kashrut* and, more significantly, "was deliberately arranged by some Cincinnati businessmen." In fact, the determination of the final menu was probably more benign and lacked any intention to antagonize the guests of HUC and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), whose tenth anniversary was combined purposefully with the college's first ordination service. Like Philipson, Appel also argued that the Trefa Banquet played a role in the series of events that ultimately led to the formation of the Conservative movement in American Judaism.⁷

Appel's investigative work and brief reflections on the Trefa Banquet, now nearly forty years old, serve as the logical point of departure for an expanded discussion of the banquet. While Appel succeeded in doing much of the historical spade work on the events of July 11, 1883, and the subsequent fallout in the national Jewish community, he did not fully address the wider context in

which the Trefa Banquet took place. A review of the relevant primary literature clearly demonstrates that the menu was typical for its time and place with respect to general culture of American and American Jewish banquets of the 1880s. Moreover, Appel did not address the significant “pork-free” aspect of the dinner and its contemporaneous medical justification, which was also applied to reevaluate the “fitness” of oysters for Jewish consumption.

With respect to the denominational consequences of the dinner, again, Appel’s research was narrow in its scope. The reaction of the traditionalists to the Trefa Banquet was not only confined to the founding of the first JTS and the subsequent emergence of a Conservative movement but also involved a wider splintering of American Judaism into three principal groupings early in the twentieth century. Indeed, heightened concern about *kashrut* among east European Jews in America early in the 1880s might explain the heated reaction of several traditional East Coast Jewish journalists. Ironically, the Trefa Banquet was also significant within the history of the Reform movement, whose views of the traditional dietary laws were in tremendous flux in 1883. As will be seen, the Cincinnati dinner was also part of a larger radicalizing trend that was to reposition the Reform movement as a whole on the issue of *kashrut*.

The Highland House Affair

The basic facts surrounding the Trefa Banquet are generally not well known and have remained embedded in the primary literature of the Highland House Affair. Three groups within the American Jewish community converged in Cincinnati in July 1883 for a series of meetings and celebrations. As stated, HUC’s first ordination service was combined with the UAHC’s tenth anniversary; Cincinnati was also host to a meeting of the Rabbinical Literary Association, a forerunner of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).⁸ The triple linkage guaranteed excellent representation from many of the most elite circles in American Jewish life during the Gilded Age.

HUC had been established in 1875 by Wise with the help of the UAHC. It was representative of a new type of rabbinic school pioneered earlier in the nineteenth century in Italy and Germany. Several attempts at opening rabbinic schools, or at least preparatory schools, had already failed in the United States by the time Wise founded HUC (although Maimonides College, established in Philadelphia in 1867 by Isaac Leeser, had ordained a class of four rabbis before closing in 1869). Wise was determined not only to keep his school open but to develop it into an important, respectable institution. To its president, commencement exercises for the first class at HUC were nothing less than a personal victory and the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.⁹

Wise, born in Steingrub, Bohemia, in 1819, had arrived in the United States in 1846. Although he had a limited Jewish education, he quickly emerged as a leading and highly controversial Jewish voice in America. After serving two

pulpits in Albany, New York, he settled in Cincinnati in 1854, where he launched both an English- and German-language Jewish newspaper, the *Israelite* and *Die Deborah*, and published his own prayer book, *Minhag America*. He believed that he had the capacity to articulate a Judaism that would unify the vast majority of American Jews under a single organizational umbrella. After a number of false starts and seemingly endless disputes within the national Jewish community, he finally helped launch the UAHC in 1873 and HUC in 1875. Now, eight years after the founding of HUC, he was about to witness and participate in the culmination of years of hard work in America.¹⁰

At 2:30 in the afternoon of July 11, all three groups converged at the Plum Street Temple in downtown Cincinnati for commencement exercises for the college. The Moorish synagogue's altar was lavishly adorned with flowers. In addition to a number of speeches by rabbis, including both traditionalists like Benjamin Szold and radicals like Kaufman Kohler, lay leaders of HUC and the UAHC also were invited to speak. A choir made up of five women and three men offered "excellent music." Two students, representing their class of four, spoke as well. "At the conclusion," the July 12, 1883 edition of *The Cincinnati Enquirer* reports, "Dr. Wise pronounced them duly ordained rabbis."¹¹

At the request of a special ad hoc committee headed by Julius Freiberg (1823–1905) representing Cincinnati's leading Jewish families, some 215 guests were invited to continue the celebration of the first class of ordainees at a grand banquet at the Highland House, a restaurant and resort on Cincinnati's Mt. Adams. Freiberg, a wealthy businessman who had founded the distilling firm of Freiberg and Workum that introduced bourbon whiskey to the world, was active in a broad range of civic and Jewish organizations, including Cincinnati's Chamber of Commerce, B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati, the UAHC (president, 1889–1903), and HUC.¹²

Arrangements were made to transport the guests on the Eden Park street-cars from Fifth and Walnut in downtown Cincinnati to the Highland House. A dinner orchestra and menu greeted the two hundred guests who rode cable cars to the top of Mt. Adams. A beautiful printed menu adorned with a colored feather informed the guests, including a number of Christian clergy and professors from the University of Cincinnati, that an elegant French cuisine dinner composed of nine courses and five alcoholic drinks would be served.

The caterer for the evening was well known in the Cincinnati Jewish community. Gustave Lindeman (d. 1928) was the food manager of the Jewish Allemania Club in Cincinnati and, subsequently, a swanky non-Jewish club in Dayton after a flood destroyed a restaurant he operated in the Queen City. Lindeman, who lived most of his life in Dayton, viewed himself as "just Jewish" and steered clear of denominational labels. He married Henrietta Oaks on May 10, 1868. Rabbi Wise officiated.¹³

Nearly a hundred years after the Trefa Banquet took place, a granddaughter of Gustave Lindeman, Edith Lindeman Calisch of Richmond, Virginia, maintained in a private correspondence that “Gus Lindeman evidently was given carte blanche when it came to the menu for the banquet and this menu was accepted by Rabbi Wise and members of the committee.” In her unverified apologium, Calisch added that “my grandfather, though Jewish, had no knowledge of whom the guests were to be and had merely followed instructions to provide ‘an elegant and sumptuous meal.’”¹⁴

When first asked for an explanation as to who decided on the menu for the evening, a defensive Wise wrote in his *Israelite* on August 3, 1883, that “said chief cook, himself a Jew wool-dyed, was to place before the guests a kosher meal.” “So it was understood,” the president of HUC continued, “in Cincinnati all along, and we do not know why he diversified his menu with multipeds and bivalves.”¹⁵ Two weeks later, in his German-language *Die Deborah*, where Wise generally disclosed his own viewpoint more fully, the bilingual editor admitted that “the Cincinnati Banquet Committee allowed a few dishes to be served which are forbidden according to Jewish ritual law.”¹⁶ Subsequently, however, when pushed to explain the actions of the committee, Wise went on the offensive and further embroiled himself in controversy.

By any standard, the party Lindeman provided HUC and UAHC on July 11, 1883, was lavish, even in an age of excess. For sure, the dinner was extremely costly. Some mistakes in the French spelling on the menu and the inclusion of cheese at the end of the menu suggests that the hosts and their food provider were not fully tutored in fine cuisine and were stretching to impress their East Coast guests. The celebration, including its food, decorations, music, and toasts, reflected the excessive banquet culture of its era and is part of a larger historical continuum of banquets, from the dining and drinking excesses of the biblical King Ahasuerus to contemporary American bar and bat mitzvah receptions and Israeli wedding receptions.¹⁷

The Cincinnati Enquirer covered the event in great detail and called the banquet a “Jewish Jollification.” According to the *Enquirer*, “The banquet at the Highland House was the most brilliant event of the session of the council. [T]he arrangements were complete in every detail, providing every possible comfort for the large gathering of ladies and gentlemen.”¹⁸ The complete menu was also reported in the daily paper as a seemingly noncontroversial matter of public record.

A number of original texts of the menu have survived over the years and are in collections of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. The first course was littleneck clams and a sherry followed by a consommé and Sauterne, a Bordeaux wine. The third course was large and included beef tenderloins with mushrooms, soft-shell crabs, a shrimp salad, potatoes in lobster bisque sauce, and another selection of Bordeaux wine. The entrée was sweetbreads accompanied

with peas. The fifth course featured frog legs in cream sauce, breaded chicken and asparagus, followed by pigeon and squab embedded in pastry, salads, and G. H. Mumm extra-dry champagne. Of course, there were plenty of desserts, including ice cream and assorted cakes. Indeed, almost every violation of *kashrut* was in evidence — seafood, tref meat, mixing milk and meat — with the one exception of pork.¹⁹ It is very possible that the sponsors of the dinner sincerely believed, from the perspective of “moderate Reform,” that this one exception rendered the banquet religiously acceptable to Jewish traditionalists at the repast, particularly in a city that sported the nickname “Porkopolis.” They could not have been more wrong.

Unlike the non-Jewish reporter at the *Enquirer*, an anonymous Jewish reporter filed a story with the *New York Herald* strongly professing that *not* everyone was impressed with the UAHC convention or comfortable with the menu. Probably written by a member of the distinguished Mendes family, the New York-based story began by stating that “a candid review of the work [of the Cincinnati Council] does not call forth special praise.” It ended with a brief comment that “a painful episode was the banquet, on the menu of which, were dishes forbidden by Jewish law. Yet rabbis and laymen assembled for Jewish interests, instead of rising in a body and leaving the hall, sat down and participated.”²⁰

Five days later, on July 27, an article appeared in New York’s *The Jewish Messenger*. Twenty-two-year-old Henrietta Szold, who had accompanied her father, Rabbi Benjamin Szold, to the Cincinnati convocation, had served as an anonymous correspondent for the paper. Her numerous abilities were recognized by the paper’s editor, who offered her a column under a nom de plume, Shulamith.²¹ As Shulamith, Szold wrote on a broad range of contemporary topics, particularly anti-Semitism and her experiences with the rapidly expanding east European immigrant community in Baltimore, where she lived.²² “I eat, drink and sleep Russians,” she once told her sister, Rachel.²³ Personally anchored in and respectful of the Jewish tradition and mindful of her journalistic responsibilities, Szold was stunned by the fare served at the Highland House, which stood in stark contrast to her own daily experience and what she observed in her home city.

“I would be outraging my own feelings were I to omit recording the indignation which was felt by a surprisingly small minority at the manner in which the banquet was served,” Szold wrote. “There was no regard paid to our dietary laws,” she continued, “and consequently two rabbis left the table without having touched the dishes, and I am happy to state that I know of at least three more who ate nothing and were indignant but signified their disapproval in a less demonstrative manner.”²⁴

On the other hand, the mere presence of Szold and other women at the banquet was somewhat revolutionary in and of itself. According to food historian John F. Mariani, “[W]omen were not admitted to all dining rooms, and until the 1870s separate rooms were provided for them to take their meals at eastern hotels.”²⁵ Mixed seating was first introduced to the American Reform synagogue in 1851 in Albany, New York, and remains a significant issue in modern Judaism in the United States and globally.²⁶

Word of the Trefa Banquet spread quickly throughout the Jewish press, with East Coast critics of Wise pressing the attack, demanding both an explanation and an apology. Wise, who in his own publications depicted the banquet along the same positive lines as suggested by *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, was soon placed on the defensive. However, instead of apologizing, Wise stonewalled and then retaliated with charges of hypocrisy, pointing to the dismissal of several leading Orthodox rabbis in the United States and Europe on the grounds that they had eaten forbidden foods.²⁷ Wise also offered arguments defending the inclusion of seafood on the menu and, at one point in the discussion, even referred to oysters as “ocean vegetables.”²⁸

A number of Wise’s loyal readers sent letters of support to his publications and labeled his critics “ignorant fanatics.”²⁹ Wise’s “new Judaism,” a Chicago correspondent wrote, “has a right to assert itself and in the very publicity of such occasions, we want to show our faces.”³⁰ A rabbi from Pittsburgh wrote that “[I]f Wise’s critics could see the hypocritical, self-indulgent though secret violations of *kashrut* by the European rabbinate, they would stop complaining about Rabbi Wise’s attitude.”³¹ A Denver-based pro-Wise rabbi remarked that the Cincinnati dinner was the proper occasion to relegate “kitchen Judaism to the antique cabinet where it belongs.”³²

The charge of “kitchen Judaism” was not unusual at that time for radical reformers to employ against their opponents in the Jewish community. Wise himself had written as early as 1865 that he didn’t “worry about the kitchen.”³³ Later, in 1893, he attacked Orthodox Jews in England for their “kitchen and stomach” religion.³⁴ Although only speculation, it is possible that “kitchen Judaism” is not only a pejorative term for an unthinking folk religion but is inherently misogynistic as well.³⁵ Banquets and the principles of “the new Judaism” were the work of men. Modern women, though tempted by culture and its culinary delights, were still tethered to the kitchen in the eyes of Wise and his so-called progressive supporters.

Meanwhile, the board of Rodeph Sholom Congregation in Philadelphia, led by its scholarly anti-Wise rabbi, Marcus Jastrow, voted to censure Wise in April, 1884, accusing him of undignified behavior and questioning his academic credentials.³⁶ Subsequently, the UAHC appointed a special committee of five distinguished leaders to look into the matter. Not surprisingly, they acquitted Wise of all charges. The traditional Jewish press in the East, led by the Mendes

family and Phillip Cowen (1853–1943), founder and publisher of *The American Hebrew*, immediately protested that the UAHC's findings were a whitewash. Facetiously, Cowan remarked that not only did Wise not know the laws of *kashrut*, but he was equally unfamiliar with the American practice "of eating oysters only in months with an 'R' in them."³⁷ Wise, of course, claimed that the crusade against him had ended with his complete exoneration.³⁸

Curiously, the continued controversy had little effect on the size and composition of the UAHC, which actually grew from 99 congregations in 1883 to 102 in 1884 before dropping to 98 in 1885. By contrast, the affair had a devastating but not fatal effect on HUC. In 1884, the year after the Highland House debacle, five students were ordained, including Ludwig Grossman, Max Heller, Isaac Rubenstein, Joseph Silverman, and Joseph Stolz. However, no one was ordained in 1886 and only one in 1887. Wise himself blamed the drop in the graduation rate to the controversy that lingered for several years after the great Highland House faux pas.³⁹

Contextualizing the Trefa Banquet

In its own controversial and unintended way, the Highland House Affair actually confirmed the centrality of food practices in traditional Jewish life, a social/historical dimension of the Jewish experience increasingly interesting to scholars of ancient Israel and rabbinic Judaism. Viewed broadly, *kashrut* is part of an essentially universal phenomenon in religious life in which food is imbued with extraordinary symbolic and social value. "Food in religious life," writes James E. Latham, "is a subject of immense proportions."⁴⁰ Conversely, abrogating religiously sanctioned food customs is equally laden with value for rebels, reformers, and schismatics who not only violate old norms but may seek to superimpose new symbolic foods of their own.

In his unpublished article on the Trefa Banquet, Appel astutely compared it to "a gastronomic incident which inaugurated the Swiss Protestant Reformation in 1522."⁴¹ Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), a dissident priest, publicly defended the eating of meat during Lent that year. Although Zwingli himself followed traditional Catholic culinary practice in preparation for Easter, he defended to the right of others to break with church tradition, especially when the reforms did not contradict scripture. Conflict with the Catholic Church quickly escalated and, in response, Zwingli wrote his first major reformatory treatise, *Archeteles*, questioning the whole ceremonial structure of the Roman Church.

In comparing the two "Trefa Banquets," Catholic and Jewish, it is interesting to note that both Wise and Zwingli were not themselves thoroughly radicalized in their eating habits. Moreover, the Swiss controversy ultimately resulted in a schism in the Swiss Church, a process that Zwingli, much like Martin Luther, led.⁴² In the case of Reform Judaism, it was the increasingly

attenuated ties of ethnicity and family as well as the external realities of anti-Semitism that prevented a true schism from occurring within the nineteenth century Jewish community.

The enormous symbolic value ascribed to food in religious life certainly applies to Jewish tradition, stretching all the way back to the earliest days of ancient Israel. A contemporary Israeli archeologist, Israel Finkelstein, has even come to the conclusion based on his own extensive field work that “half a millennium *before* the composition of the biblical text, with its detailed laws and dietary regulations, the Israelites chose, for reasons that are not entirely clear, not to eat pork. Monotheism and the traditions of the Exodus and covenant apparently come much later.”⁴³ Similarly, contemporary anthropologists including Mary Douglas and Jean Soler, who offer structuralist approaches to the study of food norms in ancient Israel, as well as Marvin Harris, who follows an ecological approach, all place dietary laws at the center of the Israelite religious experience.⁴⁴ Samuel Krauss and Max Grunwald, both of Vienna, researched and published pioneering critical works in the early decades of the twentieth century on “*Juedischen Volkskueche*,” documenting the importance of the culinary in traditional postbiblical Jewish life.⁴⁵ More recently, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has written a number of monographs on Jewish cooking in the United States and Canada; and English scholar John Cooper published a book-length study in 1993 titled *Eat and Be Satisfied: A Social History of Jewish Food*, which offers a comprehensive look at Jewish food customs as well as the halakhah of *kashrut*.⁴⁶

By contrast, the larger history of the food culture of American Jews is still largely unknown. Although Jacob R. Marcus, doyen of the study of the American Jew, characterized the religion of early American Jews as an “orthodoxy of salutary neglect,” it is abundantly clear that *kashrut* was never entirely absent among American Jews and, as the case of the Trefa Banquet demonstrates, was often at the epicenter of their religious life. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, at least three distinct positions vis-à-vis the dietary laws had developed among American Jews: ritually observant, pork-free, and nonobservant.⁴⁷ For the most part, however, serving kosher food at public Jewish occasions and in Jewish communal institutions through the Civil War and Reconstruction was the norm. It was not until the early 1880s that the radicalized nonkosher position fully rooted in public Judaism in the United States.

Keeping kosher in America in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was problematic at best. Two major issues, *shehitah* (ritual kosher slaughter) and the production of Passover matzah, faced the Jewish community, which grew rapidly from a few thousand individuals in 1820 to 150,000 people on the eve of the American Civil War. The responsibility for both kosher meat and matzah initially belonged primarily to individual synagogues. However, the American principle of the separation of church and state meant that no

outside regulatory power was available to help enforce standards, and the Jewish community itself, particularly in the larger cities, was highly resistant to creating pan-communal structures to supervise *kashrut*. The widespread employment of Judaically unknowledgeable gentile assistants to the Jewish butchers further complicated the issue of obtaining legitimately kosher meat. In New York during the 1850s, independent unions of kosher butchers and matzah bakers were formed, reflective of the rise of independent kosher food operators in the community. With an increase in the rate of Jewish immigration toward the end of the nineteenth century, the problems of the American kosher food industry became even more acute.⁴⁸

A survey of food policies of Jewish hospitals in the United States prior to the Civil War reveals that keeping kosher was the norm. An advertisement for a ball to benefit Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York in 1852 assured prospective patrons that the event would be kosher.⁴⁹ Similarly, New Orleans's new Jewish hospital announced in 1855 that it would provide its patients with kosher food,⁵⁰ as did Philadelphia's Jewish Hospital nine years later.⁵¹

On the other hand, a large number of American Jews in their private lives practiced a selective *kashrut* that by its very nature was more subjective and uneven than systematic in actual practice. The debate over selective *kashrut* centered on two issues: pork and oysters. While most American Jews seemed to refrain from eating pork, it was a different story with seafood. A leading exemplar of the pork-free approach was Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785–1851). “Noah,” his biographer Jonathan D. Sarna writes, “was vitally concerned that food brought into his home not contain lard, a swine product.”⁵² He even helped develop a chemical test that could detect the presence of lard in olive oil. While Noah also refrained from eating pork in public, he openly violated other dietary restrictions including the eating of turtles and oysters.⁵³

A widespread opinion developed on medical grounds among nineteenth century Jews justifying the “no pork, yes oyster” viewpoint. Pork was correctly held to be highly susceptible to contamination. Similarly, many American Jewish apologists, including Wise, argued that Jewish slaughter practices were more medically fit than alternative methods. When the German government adopted the Jewish mode of slaughtering animals as a health measure for food served to its military in 1894, Wise loudly applauded the action.⁵⁴ The American military also investigated serving kosher food during the Spanish-American War for health reasons. Moreover, almost immediately after the Civil War, the consumption of beef in the United States began to increase rapidly, aided by a number of technological advances including refrigerated rail cars (1871) and barbed wire (1875). Not surprisingly, pork consumption began to recede.⁵⁵

Oysters were not only widely viewed as healthy but also as being an aphrodisiac. In general, Americans consumed millions of oysters during the nineteenth century. So many oysters were transported between the Atlantic coast

and Cincinnati that the stagecoach route was referred to as the “Oyster Line.”⁵⁶ Thereafter, the oysters were transported by canal barge and rail. Oyster houses, oyster saloons, and oyster bars were found in American cities in every region. Special oyster dishes and even an oyster cracker were developed. Before they began to deplete in the 1880s, the oyster beds in the Chesapeake Bay produced fifteen billion bushels of oysters per year. Charles Dickens once commented on the American passion for seafood that he saw “at every supper at least two mighty bowls of hot stewed oysters.”⁵⁷ By analogy, it might be said that oysters were for nineteenth century American Jews what Chinese food became for their twentieth century descendants.⁵⁸

Determining Wise’s personal food policy is not easy. Frequently inconsistent, he readily changed or revised his views for opportunistic purposes. He was openly hostile to “kitchen Judaism,” yet he clearly refrained from eating swine. On the other hand, as stated previously, Wise frequently argued that oysters were kosher and, it can be assumed, he ate them. “There can be no doubt,” Wise wrote in *The American Israelite* in 1895, “that the oyster shell is the same to all intents and purposes as the scales to the clean fish, protecting against certain gases in the water.”⁵⁹ At various times, he wrote against the washing and salting of meat, the prohibition of mixing milk and meat, and the special food restrictions during Passover. “Those who waste their religious and moral sentiments in small and insignificant observances which make them neither better nor more useful,” Wise wrote, “diminish and impair their religious and moral capacity.”⁶⁰

While changing patterns in American Jewish food culture affected Jewish men, it was Jewish women, as food consumers, cooks, and the principal stewards of “kitchen Judaism,” who were profoundly affected by the new culinary climate of the post-Civil War era. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the first Jewish cookbook to appear in America, Esther Levy’s 1871 *Jewish Cookery Book*, was primarily written to promote both traditional women’s domesticity and *kasbrut* among American Jewish women. In Levy’s own words, “[W]ithout violating the precepts of our religion, a table can be spread, which will satisfy the appetites of the most fastidious.” Similarly, as early as 1863, *The Jewish Messenger* condemned “tables with forbidden viands for which many young Jewesses betray a singular relish.”⁶¹

To a great extent, the interest in cuisine, referred to in *The American Israelite* as an “anomalous monster,” was class based. “Contributors to the *Israelite* and *Die Deborah*,” according to Maria T. Baader, “repeatedly reminded their readers that neither housework nor children’s education could be fully delegated to servants without serious damage to home and family.” Baader added that children’s manners, “especially table manners, also required the close supervision of the mother.”⁶²

However, Levy and others were swimming against the cultural tide in the nontraditional and rapidly acculturating sector of the 1870s American Jewish community. Not only was culinary accommodation waxing in the post-Civil War American Jewish community, but the gastronomic accommodationists found theoretical support among both moderate pork-free reformers like Wise and, especially, the more radical German Reform rabbis in the years following the Civil War who advocated the complete abolition of the dietary laws.

Initially, American Reform Judaism was of a more conservative bent with respect to its dietary practices. Several of the first Reform congregations in the United States officially kept the dietary laws. According to historian Leon A. Jick, even radical congregations like Har Sinai of Baltimore (founded in 1842) and Emanu-El of New York (founded in 1843) “remained substantially traditional in their ritual practice. Men and women were seated separately, heads were covered, and the Sabbath and dietary laws were ‘strictly observed.’”⁶³ Writing in 1859, Chicago-based Reform Rabbi Bernard Felsenthal (1822–1908) asserted that “it would be irresponsible and reprehensible to advocate the total disregard of the dietary laws.”⁶⁴ However, with only a few exceptions, culinary traditionalists were unable to hold the line in the antebellum Reform movement.⁶⁵

The debate over the dietary laws in the early Reform movement in central Europe was more nuanced than the discussion in the United States but not particularly passionate. In 1833, Michael Creizenach (1789–1842), a teacher at Frankfurt’s liberal Jewish Philanthropin School, suggested that “the laws of Torah regarding forbidden foods and the laws regarding the separation of milk and meat be strictly observed, but that the rules relating to the slaughter and preparation of meat by non-Jews are abandoned.”⁶⁶ A moderate Reform rabbi, Leopold Stein (1810–1843), who was appointed to a pulpit in the Frankfurt community in 1843, wrote in his guide for Jewish life, *Torat Hakim*, that only the Torah’s laws regarding forbidden foods and the “prohibition of the eating of blood” be observed and that “he who does not observe these encumbering [rabbinic] ordinances has not only not transgressed the holy law, but has contributed in a conscientious and salutary manner to the restoration of the law in its purity, as well as to the possibility of living it in the present.”⁶⁷ In 1847, Hungarian reformer Moses Bruck (1812–1849) argued that Reform Jews observe none of the “dietary regulations at all except that matzoth along with leavened bread would be eaten on Passover.”⁶⁸ However, none of these positions proved compelling to the rank and file of the Reform movement.

In 1846, the issue of *kashrut* was scheduled to be discussed in Breslau at the third of three major Reform rabbinic conferences. Collectively, these conferences significantly shaped the religious program of the German Reform movement. However, unlike many of the other issues debated, the question of *kashrut* failed to generate much controversy. Rabbi David Einhorn (1809–1879), who was later brought to the United States in 1855 to serve Har Sinai Congregation

in Baltimore, Maryland, had been a member of the committee at the 1846 convention charged with making recommendations on how the dietary laws should be viewed by Reform Judaism. According to Reform historian Michael A. Meyer, the conference did not have time to take up the issue while in session.⁶⁹ Subsequently, according to British historian Harry Rabinowitz, Einhorn published the findings of the committee in his journal, *Sinai*, and argued that “dietary laws, with the exception of the prohibition to consume blood and animals that died an unnatural death, were directly related to the levitical laws of purity and priestly laws of sacrifice and were, therefore, of a mere temporary ceremonial character and not essentially religious or moral.”⁷⁰

If Wise was the principal builder of the Reform movement in America, its leading theologian and liturgist was the radical Einhorn. Born in Dispeck, Germany, Einhorn received a traditional yeshiva education before studying for his doctorate in the German university system. Radicalized both by his education and his conflicts with the Orthodox community, Einhorn developed a theological system he termed “Mosaism.” A Reform ideological purist, he believed in a spiritualized “mission of Israel” shed of its priestly and medieval trappings, including the observance of the dietary laws. He articulated his views in German to his American followers in *Sinai* and was the driving force behind the first conference of Reform rabbis in the United States, held in Philadelphia in November 1869.⁷¹

Although it is always risky to argue from silence, it seems the Philadelphia conference, convened fourteen years after Einhorn’s arrival in the United States, also, like the Breslau conference, did not take up the question of *kashrut* because the rabbis felt the issue had already been resolved, theoretically and practically, in favor of nonobservance.⁷² If so, a split had developed between the moderate reformers who organized the UAHC in 1873 and who, following the prevailing American Reform custom, still maintained something of *kashrut* and did not eat pork; and the East Coast radicals, like Einhorn and Samuel Hirsch, who called for the abrogation of the dietary laws.

In his remarks of October 10, 1872, calling for the establishment of a union of American synagogues, Moritz Loth (1832–1913), a successful businessman, community activist, prolific author of fictional works, and president of Wise’s Reform congregation Bene Jeshurun in Cincinnati, asserted that the dietary laws and *shehitah* “shall *not* be disregarded, but *commended* as *preserving health* and *prolonging life*.” Religious unity, Loth correctly understood, included a public and official commitment to *kashrut*, a commitment bolstered by medical and statistical proof.⁷³ According to Marcus, when the UAHC met in New York City in 1879, almost a decade later, “to celebrate its marriage with the Board of Delegates of American Israelite” with a “great feast at Delmonicos,” the banquet was kosher.⁷⁴

So what happened? Why just a few years later did the moderate lay leadership of the Reform movement, and perhaps even Wise himself, come to the conclusion that abstinence from pork alone constituted compliance with the dietary demands of the Jewish tradition? The answer is complex. American Jewish food folk customs, German Jewish affluence and class identification, general American banquet and culinary culture, and the ascent of “modern religion” in the 1870s and 1880s in the United States, which greatly bolstered and radicalized Reform Judaism nationally, all figure in the historical equation that resulted in the decision (or lack of a decision) to serve tref at the grand celebration at the Highland House in July 1883.

Without question, the long-term general dietary pattern in a large sector of the American Jewish community was to refrain from eating pork and other swine products while ignoring other traditional restrictions. This “no-pork” position comfortably combined Jewish tradition, contemporary culture, and modern science. Furthermore, the immense popularity of seafood in the United States in the nineteenth century, a belief in its extranutritional benefits, and rationalizations about its food classification resulted in the broad rejection of levitical restrictions on seafood among American Jews. But there was still more to the story.

Rationalizing away the dietary restrictions of traditional Judaism was not only based on science, culture, and class but also on a specifically religious argument, first introduced by the radical German reformers but then broadened and popularized by Protestant religious modernists in the United States. In his landmark 1992 study, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, Harvard professor William R. Hutchison suggests that 1883 was the highwater mark of a “New Theology” of religious modernism as represented in the writings of Washington Gladden, Henry Ward Beecher, Theodore Munger, Charles A. Briggs, and Newman Smyth. Thereafter, “the incidence of hostility to liberalism increased” and, within a short time, denominational- and seminary-based heresy trials created headlines across the United States that would last for years.⁷⁵

The New Theology, according to Hutchison, “refused to recognize any fundamental antagonism between the kingdoms of faith and of natural law.”⁷⁶ “The dominating theme of the New Theology,” Hutchison emphasizes repeatedly, is “God’s presence in the world and in human culture.”⁷⁷ Smyth, one of the advocates of religious modernism, summed up his view in 1887 by stating that “the church is rapidly learning that many of the social and secular conditions of the present time are providential arrangements in the use of which the kingdom of God can be advanced.”⁷⁸ For Reform Jews in the 1880s, the New Theology of culture and their own movement’s belief in progressive revelation and the mediation of God’s will in contemporary culture dovetailed perfectly — or so they thought.

In essence, Freiberg, Loth, and Wise were embedded in a kind of cultural and religious cocoon in Cincinnati. Given the culinary culture of the country, the ascent of religious liberalism, and the pervasiveness of tref in uptown American Jewish homes and social clubs, it is not altogether inexplicable why they allowed, or even ordered, Lindeman to serve clam, crab, and shrimp to their guests at the Highland House on July 11, 1883. They were unable to see the complete landscape of American Jewish life and, even more significantly, wrongly assumed that they were the engine pulling the train of American Judaism. Their faulty thinking was to have repercussions for years to come.

Denominational Consequences of the Highland House Affair

Reflecting in his memoirs about the Highland House Affair, the aging Philipson was correct in linking the Trefa Banquet to the founding of the first JTS in December 1886 and the subsequent denominational developments in both the Orthodox and Conservative streams in American Judaism. For two years after the Trefa Banquet, the debate over the culinary offense and its ideological underpinnings continued to rage until a group of Reform rabbis under the leadership of Kaufman Kohler (1843–1926), Einhorn’s son-in-law and one of the banquet’s speakers, promulgated the 1885 “Pittsburgh Platform.” The codification of radical Reform, including, as will be shown, the complete rejection of the dietary laws, convinced a coalition of traditionalists under the leadership of Sabato Morais (1823–1897), *hazzan* of Mikveh Israel Congregation in Philadelphia, to found a rabbinic seminary parallel to HUC for “the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism.”⁷⁹

Founded in 1886, the JTS, with Morais serving as its first president, was thoroughly Orthodox in its intent and practice, even though it modeled its name after the Conservative *Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar* in Breslau, Germany. Morais himself talked of an “Orthodox Seminary,” as did one of its earliest Hebrew and Bible instructors, Bernard Drachman (1861–1945), who later helped shape Modern Orthodoxy and served as president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations from 1908 to 1920.

Kashrut was one of a cluster of interrelated issues that first caused a broad coalition of American Jewish traditionalists to withdraw from the Reform movement. Subsequently, questions of kosher supervision also played a role in the further subdivision of the traditionalists into Conservative, Modern Orthodox, and fervently Orthodox camps. Newly arrived east European rabbis generally questioned the *hashgaha* (rabbinic kosher supervision) of the American Jewish communal institutions, especially the hospitals and orphanages that preceded their arrival in the United States, and determined to set up their own social service operations.⁸⁰

As early as 1879, four years before the Trefa Banquet, Congregation Beth Midrash Hagadol “endorsed a movement to unite the religious Jewry of New

York under a chief rabbi” with responsibilities to supervise and regulate the city’s growing kosher food trade.⁸¹ In June 1887, several congregations formed the Association of American Orthodox Hebrew Congregations to recruit a chief rabbi for New York whose responsibilities would include the supervision of the *shohetim* (ritual slaughterers).⁸² “So great is the scandal in this great holy city,” Rabbi Moses Weinberger wrote that year in his Hebrew language book, *Jews and Judaism in New York*, “that thousands of honest families who fear and tremble at the thought of their straying into one tiny prohibition or sin never realize or suspect that they are eating all sorts of unkosher meat, carcasses trodden underfoot.”⁸³

On July 7, 1888, a rabbi from Vilna, Jacob Joseph (1848–1902), arrived in New York to become the chief rabbi of the city’s growing Orthodox population. Known as a good public speaker and Zionist, Joseph attempted to impose a kosher meat tax and immediately became embroiled in controversy with nearly every sector of “downtown” Jewry. Debilitated by illness, Rabbi Joseph survived as an invalid from 1895 to 1902.⁸⁴ A subsequent attempt by the organized Jewish community, *Kehillah* (1908–1922), to regulate kosher meat also ended in failure.⁸⁵

Ironically, Cincinnati, though smaller in every respect than New York, was destined to become a major center of the kosher food industry in the United States. Just three years after the Trefa Banquet took place, Isaac Oscherwitz, a recently arrived German Jewish immigrant, established a kosher meat business in Cincinnati under the family name that quickly emerged as one of the leading suppliers of kosher meat in the United States.⁸⁶ That same year, 1886, Rabbi Dov Behr Manischewitz also arrived in Cincinnati and two years later founded his matzah and kosher food supply company, which not only revolutionized the production of matzah but also played a significant role in Jewish philanthropy, the yeshiva world, and American tax law.⁸⁷ By the end of the 1880s, the Oscherwitz and Manischewitz companies were operating successfully, in sharp contrast to the chaos of New York’s kosher food industry. At the same time, the increasingly radical Reform movement continued to move away from the dietary law observance after the heat of the Highland House Affair had simmered down in the larger American Jewish community.

Reform Judaism and *Kashrut* Since 1885

The controversy following the Trefa Banquet, its denominational consequences, and the deepening problems in the U.S. kosher food industry in the 1880s probably neither slowed nor accelerated the pace of radicalization within the Reform movement. On October 28, 1883, two members of HUC’s first ordination class, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf and Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, married their wives in a double ceremony in Coshocton, Ohio. A “no-pork” dinner was served, including fried and scalloped oysters, lobster salad, and cold buffalo

tongue, to mention but a few of the many courses provided.⁸⁸ The following year, the Trefa Banquet's caterer, Gustave Lindeman, was contracted to cater a banquet for a Jewish fraternal order in Cincinnati and, again, oysters were served as an appetizer. Even an 1891 cookbook published by the Bloch Publishing and Printing Company of Cincinnati, complete with a six-pointed Star of David on the title page, includes numerous recipes for oysters and soft-shell crabs.⁸⁹

Within two years of the Trefa Banquet, Kohler, who had succeeded his father-in-law, David Einhorn, at New York's Beth El Congregation in 1879, convened a group of rabbis in Pittsburgh to craft an authoritative platform for Reform Judaism in America. It was at this convention that the rabbis rejected even the "no-pork" *minhag* (custom). Kohler had been a student of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the architect of Modern Orthodox Judaism in Germany. While studying for his doctorate at the University of Erlangen, Kohler left Orthodoxy and embraced a radical philosophy of Reform Judaism. In 1885, in the wake of the Trefa Banquet, he gave a series of lectures defending Reform against attacks from one of New York's leading conservative rabbis, Alexander Kohut, who in the heat of the exchange had declared that "Reform is a Deformity."⁹⁰ From his exchanges with Kohut, Kohler concluded the time had arrived for a platform to be promulgated for the Reform movement in America. He even recruited Wise to serve as the head of the ad hoc conference.

Interestingly, the text of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 is less a defense of Reform against attacks from traditional Judaism as it is an apologium for Reform Judaism against criticisms leveled by Felix Adler and the Ethical Culture movement. Although a radical document from the perspective of "historical Judaism," the Pittsburgh Platform also represents a midpoint between traditional Jewish theism and ethnicity on the one hand and Adler's deracinated secular ethicism on the other. Sharply attacked from outside the movement from the left and the right, the Pittsburgh Platform quickly became both the ideological standard as well as a textual symbol of Reform Judaism in America.⁹¹

Animated by a rational, optimistic faith, the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 was clearly a Judaic parallel to the New Theology of the Protestant modernists. As such, it viewed culture — at least the part of contemporary culture it favored — as providential. Apparently, that culture had no place in it for traditional Jewish dietary practices and, in the fourth plank of the platform, the last vestige of *kashrut* was officially abrogated by the assembled rabbis:

We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.⁹²

By stating that “all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet,” Kohler and his supporters had effectively pushed the Reform movement beyond its “moderate” no-pork position and into a borderless gastronomic antinomianism. Reform culinary culture now had no limits. Synagogue banquets and Sisterhood cookbooks alike were soon to include not only seafood but pork dishes as well. Viewed historically, the Reform movement had institutionalized a truly radical vision of Judaism.

The situation was particularly pronounced in — although not limited to — the South. For example, Steven Hertzberg reports that in Atlanta, Georgia, “by the midnineties, forbidden foods like ham, game, and shellfish were unabashedly consumed in public. Oyster pâté à la Baltimore was served to Rabbi Reich and the leading members of the Temple at the Concordia Hall dedication banquet in 1893, and two years later delegates to the regional B’nai B’rith convention in Atlanta dined on fresh lobster washed down with ‘Palestine Punch.’”⁹³ As late as 1935, at the Triennial Conference of the National Council of Jewish Women in New Orleans, the entrées for the Sabbath dinner were “Baked ham aux légumes or Swiss and Bacon.”⁹⁴

Approximately half a century later, the Pittsburgh Platform was superseded by the 1937 Columbus Platform and that by the 1987 San Francisco Bicentennial Statement. While both of these documents included significant, even monumental, changes in the ideology and practice of American Reform Judaism, the movement’s official views of *kashrut* have remained virtually unchanged for nearly a hundred years. As late as 1979, the Responsa Committee of the CCAR retrospectively concluded that “although dietary laws were discussed at length during the last century and early in this century, they ceased to be a matter of primary concern for Reform Jews. This is also clearly indicated by the lack of questions regarding dietary laws addressed to the Responsa Committee through the decades.”⁹⁵

However, other forces were already at work within American Reform Judaism, and by the end of the twentieth century, the Reform movement, led by neotraditionalist members of the CCAR, began to rethink its official view of the dietary laws.⁹⁶ In 1979, the same year the Responsa Committee essentially reaffirmed Kohler’s understanding of Reform Judaism, another CCAR publication, *Gates of Mitzvah*, declared that “the range of options available to the Reform Jew is from full observance of the biblical and rabbinic regulations to total non-observance.” This new and emerging viewpoint suggested that “Reform Judaism does not take an ‘all or nothing’ approach.”⁹⁷ In 1999, a second Pittsburgh Platform directly countered Kohler’s original Pittsburgh Platform and maintained that some of the commandments not historically observed by Reform Jews “demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.”⁹⁸

Defining “the unique context of our times” now becomes the task of the contemporary Reform movement both in terms of its foundational ideas as well as in determining the mandated religious practices of Reform Judaism. The issue of *kashrut* has become particularly complex for contemporary Reform Judaism; it involves not only the issue of defining *mitzvah* in a Reform context but also answering questions about *hashgaha* and the ethics of food production and consumption. Today, as in the past, the Reform movement continues to negotiate the many tensions and relationships that exist between tradition and innovation, religious resistance and cultural adaptation, as well as the internal needs of the Reform community versus the place of Reform Judaism in the pan-historical faith and global people called Israel. In the deepest sense of the terms, the Reform movement needs to decide yet again what it believes to be kosher (fit) and what it deems to be tref (unfit).

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Notes

*The original research for this article was done in preparation for the Jacob R. Marcus Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the American Jewish Archives (AJA), at the annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), June 2001, Monterey, California. Special thanks to the AJA's director, Dr. Gary P. Zola, for his support and patience and to Barbara Steinberg, my administrative assistant, for her help.

¹Debra Nussbaum Cohen, “A Menu for Reform,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2001.

²The only critical research on the Trefa Banquet is John J. Appel's “The Trefa Banquet,” *Commentary*, Volume 41, Number 2, February 1966, pp. 75–78. Also see his longer, nineteen-page paper, “The Trefa Banquet” unpublished paper, n.d., AJA SC-5978, which was presented at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society in Cincinnati in March 1965.

³According to Appel, general historians of the American Jewish experience as well as “conservative” historians generally skirted or “tactfully avoided the issue” of the Trefa Banquet up to the 1960s. John J. Appel, “The Trefa Banquet,” unpublished paper, n.d., AJA, SC-5978, pp. 2–3. However, after the publication of his article in *Commentary*, the banquet assumed a more central, and sometimes more polemical, history in the historiography of the non-Reform movements in American Judaism. For a recent example, see Elliot Dorf, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants* (New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Department of Youth Activities, 1977, 1996), who suggests the serving of nonkosher food may have been a “deliberate attempt by Isaac Mayer Wise to drive the more traditional members out of the Reform camp so that he could more easily form a radical program for the Reform movement” (p. 13). Pro-Reform authors tend to minimize their reporting of the Trefa Banquet or not report it at all. For example, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 263, 267, 282. James G. Heller, in his *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), refers to the Highland House Affair as “trivial and ridiculous” (p. 452). Also see “Chapters in American Jewish History,” Chapter 52, 2000, American Jewish Historical Society, <http://www.ajhs.org>.

⁴The scope here is limited to the United States due to a lack of secondary literature on Reform experience in Canada. According to Rabbi Sharon Sobel, the Canadian Regional Director of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the current practice “in Greater Toronto is that most of the Reform congregations are kosher style. Some use kosher meat but only have one set of dishes. There are one or two strictly kosher congregations” (e-mail correspondence with the author, August 12, 2005). More broadly, see Gerald J.J. Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*, Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1993; and his *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community*, New York: Stoddart, 1998.

⁵David Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew*, Cincinnati: Kidd, 1941, p. 23. For another example of the development of myth as reality in American Jewish history, see the “Rebecca Gratz legend” in Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.

⁶Philipson, *My Life*, p. 23.

⁷Appel, “The Trefa Banquet,” pp. 75–78. Also see Daniel Jeremy Silver, “The Trefa Banquet Story or a Study in Causation”: unpublished, typescript, n.d., AJA, Box 511.

⁸The Rabbinical Literary Association, 1880–1882, was founded by Rabbi Max Lilienthal. See Sidney Regner, “The History of the Conference,” in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Bertram Wallace Korn, ed., New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965, p. 2.

⁹Heller, *Wise*, p. 444.

¹⁰A considerable literature exists on the life of Isaac M. Wise. Most recently, see Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise, Shaping American Judaism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Heller’s *Wise* (see note 3) is a massive, though less critical, study.

¹¹*The Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 12, 1883, p. 4.

¹²“Julius Freiberg,” in *Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, Kerry M. Olitzky, Lance J. Sussman, and Malcolm H. Stern, eds., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993, pp. 64–65.

¹³Based on correspondences from and to Edith Lindeman Calisch, a granddaughter of Gustave Lindeman, on file at the American Jewish Archives: Calisch to Norman Podhoretz, May 1, 1966; Calisch to J. Appel, May 21, 1966; Calisch to J. Appel, June 18, 1966; Calisch to Jacob R. Marcus, March 14, 1975 and April 25, 1977. All found in AJA, SC-456. Country clubs founded by German Jews in America generally continue to eschew traditional Jewish dietary restrictions.

¹⁴Calisch to Marcus, March 14, 1975, SC-12418.

¹⁵*The American Israelite*, August 3, 1883, p. 4.

¹⁶*Die Deborah*, August 17, 1883. Author’s translation.

¹⁷The “Menu Collection of The New York Public Library” — especially the Buttolph Collection, which covers the years 1890–1910 — contains more than 25,000 menus including banquet menus. For general histories of food in America, see endnote 56.

¹⁸*The Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 12, 1883, p. 4.

¹⁹Mark Bauer, a chef and instructor at the French Culinary Institute of New York City, reviewed the menu with the author (e-mail correspondence, July 24, 2000).

²⁰*New York Herald*, July 22, 1883. Photocopy available at AJA. The article was probably filed either by Henry Pereira Mendes (1852–1937), rabbi of Shearith Israel congregation in New York City and a founder both of the JTS and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; or his older brother, Frederic de Sola Mendes (1850–1927), rabbi of Congregation Shaaray Tefila in New York City, who worked within the Reform movement and later became a member of the CCAR.

²¹Joan Dash, *Summoned to Jerusalem: The Life of Henrietta Szold, Founder of Hadassah*, New York: Harper & Row, 1979, p. 25.

²²“Shulamith,” *The Jewish Messenger*, July 27, 1883.

²³Dash, p. 25. For Wise’s reaction to the arrival of increasing numbers of Russian Jews in America, see *The American Israelite*, May 21, 1886, p. 6, where he suggests that “no immigrant student over the age of fourteen be sent to the College as after that age it is difficult to change their manners or speech to the purely American.” Initially, he was more welcoming.

²⁴*The Jewish Messenger*, July 27, 1883, p. 6. A humorous account of a private dinner at Wise’s home during the Szold’s visit was reported by Bertha Szold, a younger sister of Henrietta, who accompanied her and her father to Cincinnati. About the dinner at the Wises’, Bertha wrote, “There were fifteen or twenty rabbies [sic] there. At dinner when we were going to eat the turkey, some more rabbies came in, then everybody got up from the table to talk to the rabbies that came in, then the rabbies that came in took the other people’s places and began to eat, and then went off. Not long after dinner we had ice cream and cake, and then we went home.” Quoted in Alexandra Lee Levin, *The Szolds of Lombard Street: A Baltimore Family, 1859–1909*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960, p. 159.

²⁵John F. Mariani, “Restaurant,” in *The Encyclopedia of American Food & Drink*, New York: Lebhar-Friedman Books, 1999, p. 269.

²⁶Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue,” in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Jack Wertheimer, ed., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 363-394.

²⁷In 1869, Wise had reported on the dismissal of Rev. Dr. Bernard Illowy because he did not adhere strictly to the regulations of the milk and meat laws (*The American Israelite*, September 24, 1869). Isaac Leeser (1806–1869), the leading voice of antebellum Jewish traditionalism, left his position at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia in a storm of controversy, in part because of a suspicion that he did not strictly adhere to the dietary laws. On Leeser, see Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995, p. 175.

²⁸*The American Israelite*, April 4, 1895, p. 4. The notion of oysters as sea vegetables was suggested to the author by Jonathan D. Sarna in a private correspondence (April 4, 2000) and is based on Professor Sarna’s reading of Louis Finkelstein’s Hebrew introduction to his father’s (Simon Finkelstein) prayer book. S. Finkelstein, *Seder Tefilah*, Jerusalem, 1968, p. 10 [in Hebrew]. For Wise’s complex views on oysters see Dena Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati*, New York, 1937, pp. 237–240.

²⁹Reactions by Wise’s supporters are reported in Appel, “The Trefa Banquet,” typescript, pp. 10–11.

³⁰*The American Israelite*, March 7, 1884, p. 6.

³¹*Die Deborah*, July 18, 1884.

³²*Die Deborah*, August 10, 1883.

³³*Die Deborah*, Volume XI, p. 34.

³⁴*The American Israelite*, November 9, 1893.

³⁵On women and *kashrut* in nineteenth century America, see endnote 61.

³⁶*The American Israelite*, May 9, 1884, p. 4; May 23, p.4.

³⁷*The American Hebrew*, July 25, 1883. Cowen’s autobiography, *Memories of an American Jew*, was published in 1932. He published the work of numerous American Jewish luminaries, including Henry P. Mendes, Emma Lazarus, Mary Antin, and Alexander Kohut.

³⁸*The American Hebrew*, July 18, 1884.

³⁹Wise reported that there were no graduates from HUC in 1885 because of opposition to the

college. See *The American Israelite*, April 3, 1885, p. 4.

⁴⁰James E. Latham, "Food," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed., New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995, Volume 5, pp. 387–393.

⁴¹John J. Appel, "The Trefa Banquet," unpublished paper, n.d., AJA, SC-5978, p. 19.

⁴²For more on Zwingli see W.P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

⁴³Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, New York: The Free Press, 2001, p. 120.

⁴⁴Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, New York: Routledge, 1966, 1984; Jean Soler, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," in *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales*, Volume 5, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979, pp. 126–138; Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Culture*, London: Fontana Collins, 1977.

⁴⁵John Cooper, *Eat and Be Satisfied: A Social History of Jewish Food*, Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1993, p. xiii.

⁴⁶Also see Erich Isaac, *Commentary*, Volume 41, Number 1, January 1966, pp. 36–41.

⁴⁷In recent times, other positions have developed within the Reform movement including levitical (no pork, no seafood), eco-*kasbrut* and ethical *kasbrut*. For a recent discussion of *kasbrut* in American Reform Judaism, see "The Civilized Diet: A Conversation with Rabbi Simeon Maslin," *Reform Judaism*, Summer 2007, pp. 38, 41, 50.

⁴⁸Harold P. Gastwirt, *Fraud, Corruption and Holiness: The Controversy over the Supervision of Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City, 1881–1940*, Port Washington, New York: National University Publications, 1974, pp. 18–26.

⁴⁹Allon Schoener, *The American Jewish Album: 1654 to the Present*, New York: Rizzoli, 1983, p. 93.

⁵⁰Jacob R. Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775–1865*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955, Volume 2, p. 87.

⁵¹Allon, *American Jewish Album*, p. 94.

⁵²Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Manuel Noah*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980, p. 141.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Dena Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati*, New York: Renaissance Book Company, 1937, p. 247.

⁵⁵Mariani, "Restaurant," in *Encyclopedia*, p. 269.

⁵⁶Mariani, "Oysters," in *Encyclopedia*, p. 226. For more on the history of food and eating in America, see Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997; and Harvey A. Levenstein, *The Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. For a comparative perspective, see Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

⁵⁷Mariani, "Restaurant," in *Encyclopedia*, p. 269.

⁵⁸Numerous theories, none definitive, exist on American Jews' attraction to Chinese food. See Gaye Tuchman and Harry G. Levine, "New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern," *Contemporary Ethnography*, 1992, Volume 22, Number 3, pp. 382–407; Mimi Sheraton, "A Jewish Yen for Chinese," *New York Times Magazine*, September 23, 1990, p. 71; and Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.

⁵⁹Quote in Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 14.

⁶⁰Quoted in Wilansky, *Sinai*, p. 246.

⁶¹Both Levy and the *Messengers'* quotes are reported in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Kosher Gourmet in the Nineteenth Century Kitchen: Three Jewish Cookbooks in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Gastronomy*, Winter 1986/1987, Volume 2, Number 4, p. 63.

⁶²Maria T. Baader, "From 'The Priestess of the Home' to 'the Rabbi's Brilliant Daughter'": Concepts of Jewish Womanhood and Progressive Germanness in *Die Deborah* and *The American Israelite*, 1854–1900," in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XLIII*, 1998, p. 67.

⁶³Leon A. Jick, "The Reform Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue*, p. 86. Also see Kevin Proffitt, "A *Kashrut* Challenge in Nineteenth Century American Judaism," 10 Minutes of Torah, August 2, 2005. Accessed at <http://tmt.urj.net/archives/2socialaction/080205.htm>.

⁶⁴Quoted in W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources until 1948*, New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965, pp. 265–266.

⁶⁵For example, Leeser reports in *The Occident* (Volume XVI, 1858, p. 360) that Har Sinai congregation in Baltimore abolished *kashrut*.

⁶⁶Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, pp. 212–213; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 119–121.

⁶⁷Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of Its European Origins*, New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963, pp. 260–265.

⁶⁸Meyer, *Response*, p. 160.

⁶⁹Meyer, *Response*, p. 150.

⁷⁰Harry Rabinowitz, "Dietary Laws," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1971, Volume 5, column 44.

⁷¹A full, critical biography of David Einhorn is a major desideratum. See Kaufman Kohler's eulogistic essay in the *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Cincinnati: CCAR, 1909, pp. 215–270.

⁷²Sefton D. Temkin, *The New World of Reform*, London: Leo Baeck College, 1971, pp. 111–112.

⁷³*Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, Cincinnati: Bloch and Company, 1879, Volume 1, p. i. On Loth, see "Moritz Loth," in *Reform Judaism in America*, Kerry M. Olitzky, ed., pp. 132–133.

⁷⁴Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, Volume III, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993, p. 108. Delmonico's, established in 1827 by two Swiss brothers, was the first "public restaurant" to open in the United States and was known for its lavish meals and excessive portions.

⁷⁵William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1992, p. 105.

⁷⁶*Ibid*, p. 97.

⁷⁷*Ibid*, p. 79.

⁷⁸*Ibid*, p. 102.

⁷⁹Alvin Kass, "Jewish Theological Seminary of America," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1971, Volume 10, Column 96.

⁸⁰In St. Louis, neither the Jewish hospital nor the orphanage provided kosher food. See Walter Ehrlich, *Zion in the Valley: The Jewish Community of St. Louis*, Volume 1, Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997, pp. 390–391.

⁸¹Harold P. Gastwirt, *Fraud, Corruption and Holiness: The Controversy over the Supervision of Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City, 1881–1940*, Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974, pp. 55–73.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Jonathan D. Sarna, *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York*, New York: Homes and Meier, 1982, p. 50.

⁸⁴Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Volume 44, 1955, pp. 129–198.

⁸⁵Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908–1922*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 76–85. For a discussion of the subsequent history of the kosher food industry in the United States, see Saul Bernstein, *The Orthodox Union Story: A Centenary Portrayal*, Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1997.

⁸⁶A 1998 film documentary directed by Bill Chayes, *Divine Food: 100 Years in the Kosher Delicatessen Tradition*, focuses on the Oscherwitz family.

⁸⁷Jonathan D. Sarna, "Manischewitz Matzah and the Rabbis of the Holy Land: A Study in the Interrelationship of Business, Charity and Faith" (in Hebrew), *Gesher* 140, Winter 1999, pp. 41–49. Also see Ari Y. Greenspan and Ari Z. Zivotofsky, "Hand or Machine: Two Roads to Fulfilling the Mitzva of Matza," in *The Jewish Observer*, April 2004, pp. 20–33.

⁸⁸A handwritten invitation to the Berkowitz-Krauskopf wedding (October 28, 1883) and a fragment of a newspaper clipping reporting on the ceremony and dinner are on file at the AJA.

⁸⁹*Aunt Babetz's Cook Book. Foreign and Domestic Receipts for the Household. A Valuable Collection of Receipts and Hints for the Housewife, Many of Which are Not to be Found Elsewhere*, Cincinnati: Bloch, 1891.

⁹⁰Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004, p. 120.

⁹¹Benny Kraut, *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979; Sefton D. Temkin, "The Pittsburgh Platform: A Centenary Assessment," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Volume 32, Fall 1985, pp. 1–12.

⁹²Meyer, *Response*, p. 388. A complete text of the Pittsburgh Platform (1885) is also available online at <http://ccarnet.org/documents> and positions/platforms.

⁹³Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978, p. 68.

⁹⁴Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893–1993*, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1993, p. 127. Currently, food service at many "Jewish" country clubs continues to include both swine and seafood. Author's observation.

⁹⁵"Responsum 49: *Kashrut* in Reform Judaism (1979)," *American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Walter Jacob, ed., New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1979, pp. 128–131.

⁹⁶Arnold Jacob Wolf, "The Need to Be Commanded (1967)," in *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents*, Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, eds., New York: UAHC, 2001.

⁹⁷*Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*, Simeon J. Maslin, ed., New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1979, pp. 40, 130–132. The Union of Reform Judaism's Canadian summer camp, Camp George, founded in 1999, is under the supervision of the Kashruth Council of Canada.

⁹⁸Meyer and Plaut, *Reader*, p. 210.

Anshe Sfard: The Creation of the First Hasidic Congregations in North America¹

Ira Robinson

The documents do not speak unless someone asks them to verify, that is, to make true, some hypothesis.

— Antoine Prost²

I. The “Absence” of Prewar North American Hasidism

Hasidim are very much a presence in the large urban communities of North American Jewry today. Numerous scholarly studies, mostly sociological and anthropological in nature, examine the Hasidic phenomenon in North America.³ Most of these studies, however, pay scant attention to Hasidism in North America prior to World War II, when a number of Hasidic spiritual leaders of the first rank, such as Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, arrived as refugees from Europe.⁴ Hasidic life in North America prior to 1940 is still very much a terra incognita.⁵ We need to ask ourselves, “Why is this?” It is well understood that the great eastern European Jewish migration to North America, among other places, came from all areas of eastern Europe, including those in which Hasidism was the dominant Judaic religious expression. While it is clear that some Jewish emigrants from Hasidic-dominated areas had decisively broken with the Hasidic tradition while still in Europe and others did so after their emigration, there still remained large numbers who retained an attachment to traditional *Yiddishkeit* as understood and practiced in their hometowns. Logically, this would mean that Jews from Hasidic backgrounds would seek to found synagogues in North America in which their Jewish experiences in Europe would resonate. Yet the scholarly consensus seems to be that the Hasidic emigrants were less successful at doing so than their non-Hasidic contemporaries. Thus, Lloyd Gartner stated, “Hasidim emigrated to the U.S. within the great migration of 1880–1925, where they generally formed part of the larger body of pious immigrant Jews, while frequently forming *shviblekh* of their own. They seem to have been less successful than non-Hasidic immigrant Jews in transmitting their style of religious life to the next generation, because apart from their *zaddikim*, who had remained in Europe, they apparently felt a fatalistic impotence to perpetuate the Judaism they knew.”⁶

This article will be, in essence, an inquiry into the validity of Gartner’s surmise. In the last few decades, the study of eastern European immigrant

Orthodox Judaism in North America has significantly progressed, with much of the attention going to studies on the immigrant Orthodox rabbinate.⁷ However, this scholarship has not yet paid sufficient attention to the special circumstances of the Hasidic stream of immigration. The general scholarly understanding is that the thousands of congregations founded by Jews of the immigrant generation were overwhelmingly Orthodox in nature and that immigrant Orthodoxy was largely transient in nature, often not sustained much beyond the immigrant generation. This consensus will not be challenged here. However, this article will take a closer look at the Hasidic phenomenon in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Before we can begin doing so, however, we must pay some attention to why pre-World War II Hasidic immigration to North America made such little impression on the scholars studying North American Jewry in that era. One of the reasons may, perhaps, stem from the fact that until recently, Hasidim, with the partial exception of Chabad,⁸ tended not to record their history,⁹ whereas those Jews who had consciously broken with Jewish Orthodoxy often understood the historical nature of their endeavors and recorded them in memoirs and narratives.¹⁰

Many of the Jews who had consciously broken with their Judaic past also understood themselves to be engaged in a struggle with Orthodoxy in general, and with Hasidism in particular, for the very definition of what *Yiddishkeit* would mean to the next generation. Thus, in Europe, leading figures of secular *Yiddishism*, such as Yehuda Leib Peretz, tried to portray their own version of “Hasidism,”¹¹ and still others, such as Mendele Mokher Sforim, desired to excise Hasidism from the landscape of the eastern European shtetl. In the words of critic Dan Miron, “[Mendele’s] novels have almost nothing to say about Hasidism and the Hasidic way of life, in spite of the fact that the Ukrainian shtetl society upon which the writer focused was largely dominated by Hasidism.”¹² Furthermore, Hasidism as a movement found itself the target of the extreme opprobrium of numerous nineteenth- and early twentieth century critics, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for whom Hasidism symbolized all that was wrong with eastern European Judaism.¹³ The young historian Simon Dubnow summed up the turn of the twentieth century scholarly view of the movement when he wrote in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*:

Hasidism is so deeply grounded in Russo-Polish Judaism that it has proved impossible to uproot it. It still has its hundreds of thousands of adherents; and, although its development has been temporarily arrested, its vitality can not be doubted. Started as a counterpoise to rabbinical and ritual formalism, it still satisfies the religious requirements of the uneducated masses. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, owing to a general social reaction in the life of the Russian Jews, a measure of revival was noticed in Hasidic circles... Though not producing at present any prominent personalities in

literature or in communal life, Hasidism nourishes itself by its stored-up reserves of spiritual power. In the eighteenth century it was a great creative force which brought into stagnant rabbinical Judaism a fervent stream of religious enthusiasm. Under the influence of Hasidism the Russo-Polish Jew became brighter at heart but darker in intellect. In the nineteenth century, in its contact with European culture, it was more reactionary than rabbinism. The period of stagnation which it has lately passed through must, however, result in its gradual decay.¹⁴

It is worth noting several items in Dubnow's description, which tellingly reflected and informed both the scholarly and the popular opinion of Hasidism in the era we are examining: (1) its followers are the "uneducated masses,"¹⁵ (2) it is described intellectually as "dark" and "reactionary," (3) in its present "period of stagnation," it is sustained by "its stored-up reserves of spiritual power," but it is fated to gradually decay.

Given this evaluation, it is no surprise at all that both European and North American observers expressed horror at the thought that Hasidism might actually come to America. Thus, when, in 1873, news arrived in Europe that a group of Hasidim had founded a synagogue in Chicago, the *Israelitische Wochenschrift* of Magdeburg carried the following:

A Polish synagogue is to be inaugurated. The detailed description lets [us] know that we have to do with a group of Hasidim. It is to be regretted that such scenes should be taking place in America.¹⁶

In North America itself, another Hasidic congregation, founded in Montreal in 1884, elicited negative comment from an observer who expressed the fear that "the malignant leprosy of *Hasidut* will spread on the soil of this land."¹⁷ The traditionalist-oriented *The American Hebrew*, in response to a letter to the editor defending the conduct of a Hasidic rabbi in New York in 1893, stated editorially,

"We should all exert the fullest influence possible to discountenance the transplanting of this system to this country."¹⁸

II. Methodological Considerations

As we can see from this reaction, there were eastern European Jews in North America from the very beginnings of the mass migration who founded congregations that contemporary Jews understood as "Hasidic." But what does "Hasidic" actually mean in this context? One important factor to take into consideration is that the Hasidic spiritual leadership, particularly at the beginning of the migration, tended not to emigrate. Second, this leadership also tended to discourage its followers from emigration because they had grave doubts about

the viability of Jewish life in the New World (though this pessimism held true no less for the *Mitnagdim* than for the Hasidim).¹⁹ Thus, for these Hasidic leaders, no less than for the detractors of Hasidism, North American Hasidic life had no “right” to exist.

Hasidism has indeed been classically defined as a leadership-centered movement. Was the Hasidic rank and file, however, merely an inert mass, taking its entire direction from its spiritual leadership? Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, in a recent article, has demonstrated the importance of understanding Hasidism from the perspective of the ordinary Hasidim, who often lived at a considerable distance from their leadership.²⁰ If we look primarily at the Hasidic congregations in North America and compare them to Hasidic institutions in Europe established at a distance from the Rebbe’s court, we will perhaps arrive at a more balanced view of North American Hasidic life.²¹

What is our evidence for Hasidic life in North America during the mass migration era? It consists largely of the congregations that the immigrants founded and of the rabbis who attempted to provide spiritual leadership for the emigrants. Both of these areas need to be examined with great care. With respect to the synagogues, particularly, some scholars have almost reflexively referred to them as “copies” of the synagogues the immigrants experienced in their home communities.²² A typical expression of this idea is where the worship in these synagogues has been described as “the meticulous preservation of the traditional Orthodox service.”²³ More recent scholarship, however, recognizes that there were important differences between the two.²⁴ It can be readily conceded that the immigrants indeed attempted to “copy” the worship of their hometowns, as long as it is understood that these “copies” were recognizably different from the originals, if only because, as Moses Rischin points out, the synagogues that were created in New York’s immigrant Jewish district often functioned as “many sided landsmanschafts, uniting the features of the Old World burial, study, and visitors-of-the-sick societies.”²⁵

When we examine these immigrant Hasidic congregations, we find two important factors worthy of our attention. The first is liturgy. One of the primary distinguishing factors of the Hasidic movement, from its eighteenth century origins, was its adoption of *Nusah Sfard*, a distinctive liturgy derived from, but not identical to, that of the Sephardic Jews.²⁶ But whereas in eastern Europe, Hasidic congregations were most often identified by the name of the movement or its spiritual leader, so that one referred to the “*Gerrer Shtibl*” of Warsaw, in North America Hasidic synagogues often found it necessary to identify themselves with the designation *Anshe Sfard* [Men of the *Sfard* liturgy]. *Sfard* in a number of variant spellings is present in a large proportion of congregational names. Sometimes it is alone, as in *Anshe Sfard*, while at other times it is combined with another title, such as *Agudath Achim Anshe Sfard*. That *Anshe Sfard* occurred in the names of many North American Hasidic congregations,

but not European congregations, lets us know that, in North America, a “code word” was often thought to be necessary.

With respect to the spiritual leadership of the congregations, it is reasonably clear that the majority of the pioneer eastern European immigrant Orthodox rabbis in North America were Lithuanian and hence non-Hasidic.²⁷ With some exceptions, such as Toronto,²⁸ rabbis from heavily Hasidic areas, such as Congress Poland, the Ukraine, and Galicia, came to North America relatively later. They often found difficulty in establishing themselves, particularly in the kosher meat industry, which alone afforded the earlier, non-Hasidic immigrant rabbis the opportunity to earn a decent living. In certain cases, the endemic rabbinical disputes encountered in city after city in this era in North America can be plotted according to Hasidic-*Mitnagdic* fault lines.²⁹

A final methodological note is that any survey of North American Jewish life must include data both from New York, the largest and culturally most important North American Jewish community then and now, and what New Yorkers often call “out of town”: the rest of North America.

III. Hasidic Synagogues

The researcher attempting to get a handle on the synagogues of New York in the prewar era must possess three important lists of congregations. The first was published in the *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 2 (1900–1901), which lists community organizations, including synagogues, throughout the United States.³⁰ The second is the listing of congregations in the *Jewish Community Register* published by the New York Kehilla in 1918.³¹ The third is a 1939 Works Progress Administration (WPA) survey of New York’s Jewish houses of worship.³²

For the synagogues surveyed, we generally possess the names, locations, dates of foundation, and other significant information. This allows us to attempt some preliminary generalizations about Hasidic/*Anshe Sfard* congregations in the five boroughs from the beginning of the twentieth century to the outbreak of World War II, understanding full well that the surveys cited were likely not complete and contain some errors.

What becomes immediately clear is that evidence of *Anshe Sfard* congregations is relatively small at the turn of the twentieth century and becomes considerably larger in subsequent decades. Thus, in the *American Jewish Year Book* survey, only three New York synagogues used *Sfard* in their names.³³ This may indicate that immigration of Hasidic-oriented Jews tended to be later in the wave of immigration and that, therefore, fewer congregations were founded before the early twentieth century. It may also indicate the marginality of many of the *Sfard* synagogues at the turn of the century, which allowed them to be overlooked by the survey.

The New York Kehilla survey, nearly two decades later, reveals a significantly better showing. Of the 784 congregations listed, thirty-four, or nearly 5 percent, have *Sfard* as part of their names, six have *Nusach Ari*, and another twenty-two advertise themselves as “Hasidic” in their names.³⁴

In the WPA survey, some two decades later, the first thing to note is that fully 113 synagogues in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx³⁵ had *Sfard* as part of their name, while another sixteen advertised themselves as *Nusach Ari*.³⁶ This is a significant portion of the total number of 2,033 synagogues listed, slightly higher in percentage than the Kehilla survey. It is also clear that not every synagogue that prayed with a Hasidic liturgy felt the need to advertise *Nusach Sfard* in its name. For many, it was likely sufficient to advertise themselves by the name of a town in which Hasidic worship predominated to give potential worshippers the right idea.

Beyond the number of clearly *Nusach Sfard* congregations, it is important to note the smaller number of synagogues on the Kehilla and the WPA lists that clearly indicate their adherence to a particular Hasidic court. In this respect, they could be considered similar to the European Hasidic synagogues that functioned at a distance from the movement’s center. Hasidic groups represented in 1930s New York included Karlin, Ger, Viznitz, Stolín, and Chabad. It is noteworthy that these synagogues, and others named from prominent Hasidic leaders such as Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam of Sanz, were not founded late in the immigration period. On the contrary, the synagogue of the Karlin Hasidim was founded on the Lower East Side as early as 1879 and apparently spawned a Karlin synagogue in Brooklyn, founded in 1912. Similarly, the Stolín Hasidim founded their synagogue in Manhattan in 1897, and a Stoliner synagogue opened in Brooklyn in 1924. The WPA survey thus indicates that, besides the *Anshe Sfard* synagogues, there were at least sixteen other synagogues whose names definitely indicate their Hasidic nature: eight in Manhattan, six in Brooklyn, and two in the Bronx. These synagogues, and others whose names do not allow such a close identification, presumably maintained close relations with European spiritual leaders through personal visits, letters, and telegrams.³⁷

Any survey of Jewish communities outside New York City will find *Anshe Sfard* synagogues to be nearly ubiquitous. A general pattern, repeated in many communities, is that the first eastern European congregation to be founded is non-Hasidic, and then, as soon as the demographic growth of the immigrant Jewish community allowed, a *Sfard* congregation was founded. Thus, among larger communities in Philadelphia, the first eastern European congregation, B’nai Avraham, was founded in October 1882 and B’nai Jacob *Anshe Sfard* in 1883.³⁸ Toronto’s *Mitnagdic* Goel Tzedek was followed in 1887 by the “Russian” [Ukrainian] and Galician Chevra Tehilim.³⁹ In Boston in the 1910s, two separate congregations were known simply as *Anshe Sfard*, and in the 1920s, there were three separate congregations with different addresses and no other

name.⁴⁰ In smaller communities such as Louisville, Kentucky, “A secession from Beth Israel of some Russian members in 1881 led to the establishment of the B’nai Jacob congregation. . . . The old B’rith Sholom synagogue, on First Street, near Walnut Street, has been acquired by the Anshe Sfar, most of whom are South-Russians, worshipping after the ritual of the Hasidim.”⁴¹

It was clearly understood that the *Anshe Sfar* congregation was “worshipping after the ritual of the Hasidim.”

IV. Hasidic Spiritual Leadership

As we have already indicated, however, “worshipping after the ritual of the Hasidim” constitutes only part of the Hasidic experience. The rest of the Hasidic experience depended greatly on the quantity and the quality of the spiritual leadership available. The consensus among contemporary observers of the North American Hasidic scene is that World War I marks something of a watershed. Prior to the war, there was little authentic Hasidic leadership in North America and certainly no Hasidic rabbis of the first rank. The relatively few Hasidic rabbis who did come to North America in the pre-World War I era were men with a claim to distinguished Hasidic descent (*einiklekh*) or nonestablished Hasidic leaders (*shtikl rebbes*) who had tried and failed to achieve satisfactory rabbinical positions in Europe.⁴² In this situation, many *Anshe Sfar* congregations would not possess adequate Hasidic spiritual leadership. Such a situation may be reflected by one of these pioneer Hasidic rabbis, Yudel Rosenberg, who emigrated from Poland to Toronto in 1913. In the introduction to his book, *ha-Keriah ha-Kedosha*, which dealt with the laws relevant to public Torah reading in the synagogues, Rosenberg states that he wrote the book for congregations with no rabbis capable of interpreting the relevant laws.⁴³

It is interesting to note in this connection that, in terms of rabbinical leadership, it should not be thought that the phenomenon of *einiklekh* leadership was unique to Hasidic life in North America. Until World War I, Hasidic rabbis generally resided in small towns, not in large cities like Warsaw, which had large Hasidic populations. Only rabbis of smaller reputation lived in large cities on a permanent basis.⁴⁴

World War I and its aftermath, which brought unprecedented death and destruction to the Jews of eastern Europe that was overshadowed only by the immensity of the Holocaust, seems to have changed the minds of at least a portion of the Hasidic leadership with respect to urban living as well as emigration. Many Hasidic spiritual leaders had been displaced by the raging battles of the war to large cities, such as Warsaw and Vienna. It is significant that the story of the emigration to the United States of Rabbi Mordecai Shlomo Friedman, the Boyaner Rebbe, involved a wartime-induced stay in Vienna, as well as the encouragement of the Tchortkover Rebbe, who told Rabbi Friedman that in going to America, he would be able to accomplish something for *Yiddishkeit*.⁴⁵

There is something of a consensus among early twentieth century observers of the Hasidic scene in North America that 1917 constituted a watershed year for American Hasidic life. Thus, the *New York Times* obituary of the prominent Brooklyn Hasidic rabbi, Vigdor Regenbogen, noted that, circa 1900 when Regenbogen came to New York, “there were very few Chasidim in America,” whereas “since 1917 many Chasidic centres had sprung up here with the exodus from wartime eastern Europe.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Sh. Erdberg, writing in 1927, understood that the “pioneer” *gute yidn* in America had arrived a decade previously.⁴⁷

Beyond the ravages of World War I, the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Ukraine and the harsh repression of Judaism by the Soviet Union also helped induce a number of Hasidic rabbis to immigrate to North America.⁴⁸ Thus, Hasidic Rabbi Oshea Rabinowitz, in his first book published after his arrival in America, stated, “This my composition is dedicated... with thanks to God who brought me, my children, and my childrens’ children from the vale of tears, from the field of slaughter, the land of Ukraine which is in Russia, the sinful country.”⁴⁹

Indeed, by the 1920s, a journalist writing in New York’s *Jewish Day* could state that not a block in New York City does not contain a sign advertising the presence of a Hasidic rabbi, whether “true” (e.g., with the right family connections) or “false.”⁵⁰ The ubiquity of Hasidic rabbis in New York is further attested in a 1944 article of Isaac Bashevis Singer in the *Forward*. As Singer stated, “Now New York is full of Rebbes, Rebbes’ sons, grandsons. They conduct *tishn* in the [Lower] East Side, in Williamsburg, and in all areas of Brooklyn. They advertise in the *Morgen Zhurnal*.”⁵¹ The phenomenon of Hasidic rabbis coming to America to settle also inspired the satirical play *The Hasidic Rabbi*, performed by the Maurice Schwartz Troupe in 1928. The premise of the play was the incongruity of Hasidic rabbis in New York: “as grotesque an anachronism as a caravan of camels in a city of subways and motor cars.”⁵²

The number of Hasidic spiritual leaders who immigrated to North America in this era will probably never be known with great exactitude, especially since one observer’s rabbi may be another’s charlatan. However, it is possible to get some idea of the magnitude of this immigration by looking at the biographies in Tzvi Rabinowicz’s *Encyclopedia of Hasidism*. In it, some forty-seven Hasidic rabbis are listed as having immigrated to North America in the period 1893–1934. All but two of them are said to have arrived after 1920. Not surprisingly, most of them wound up in New York (twelve in Manhattan, ten in Brooklyn, and four in the Bronx). Other cities include Chicago (five), Philadelphia (four), Boston (three), Detroit (two), St. Louis (two), Montreal, Toronto, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee (one each).⁵³

Perhaps the best illustration of the immigration of Hasidic rabbis to North America in this period is the story of the Twersky family, descended from the

well-known Ukrainian Hasidic leader, Rabbi Mordecai of Chernobyl.⁵⁴ No less than six Twersky cousins came to America between 1913 and 1938. The first to come was Rabbi David Mordecai Twersky, who settled in New York in 1913, but also visited Hasidic congregations in other major communities, such as Philadelphia.⁵⁵

His house, located at 9 Attorney Street, included a synagogue, Kehal Hasidim, that advertised itself as having “hundreds of members, all of them [God-]fearing and perfect, for only Sabbath-observant and proper Jews are accepted as members.” The Talner Rebbe further announced that he received visitors from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., and from 5:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.⁵⁶ His younger brother, Rabbi Moshe Zvi, came to New York in 1922 and shortly thereafter moved to Philadelphia at the behest of a group of Hasidim, presumably those who had been visited by Rabbi David Mordecai.⁵⁷ A third brother, Rabbi Meshullam Zusia, came to Boston in 1927. A cousin, Rabbi Hanokh Henikh Twersky, arrived in Chicago in 1924, and Rabbi Jacob Isaac, who came originally to Chicago in 1926, moved to Milwaukee in 1927 to become Rabbi of Congregation *Anshe Sfard* there.⁵⁸ Rabbi Jacob Israel Twersky came to the United States in 1938, settling in Brooklyn. In 1934, Rabbi David Mordecai’s son, Rabbi Yohanan, added to the network of Twerskys in North America by moving to Montreal, where he presided over a Talner *bet ha-midrash*.

The Twerskys may have constituted the largest family group of Hasidic rabbis to settle in North America in this period, but they were far from alone. There were enough to necessitate the creation of an organization, the Agudas ha-Admorim of the United States and Canada. Too little is known about this organization, which was apparently founded in 1924 and led by Rabbis Oshea Rabinowitz and Yehuda Aryeh Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe, who had arrived in America in 1922.⁵⁹ Its very name, however, evokes that of the organization of eastern European Orthodox rabbis, the Agudas ha-Rabbonim of the United States and Canada, founded in 1902.⁶⁰ It is reasonable to assume that just as the Agudas ha-Rabbonim was founded in order to separate those North American rabbis who had “proper” rabbinic preparation from those who did not, so the Agudas ha-Admorim was an attempt to separate “valid” from “false” claimants to Hasidic spiritual leadership. It seems also reasonable to assume that the Agudas ha-Admorim was founded at least partially as a counterweight to the power of the Agudas ha-Rabbonim, which was dominated by non-Hasidic Lithuanian rabbis.

It is not possible in this article to detail the stories of all, or even of most, of the Hasidic rabbis who came to North America in the interwar period. I would, however, like to go into some detail concerning the Hasidic rabbis who settled in Philadelphia. The first to come was Rabbi Moshe Lipschitz, who was born in Galicia. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1911 after a short sojourn in St. Louis. He was known to some as the “Philadelphier Rebbe” and to others as the

“Sechter Zaddik,” after his residence on South Sixth Street.⁶¹ The next to arrive, already mentioned, was Rabbi Moshe Zvi Twersky, the Talner Rebbe. The third was Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz, the Monstricher Rebbe.⁶² He came to America in 1924 at the age of 23 along with his father, Rabbi Osheah Rabinowitz, who settled in Brooklyn, became popularly known as the “Brownsviller Rebbe,” and served as president of the Agudas ha-Admorim.⁶³

The presence of these three rebbes in Philadelphia, each with his own synagogue and following and each with connections to other Hasidic leaders both in North America and in Europe, indicate that by the 1920s, a Hasidic immigrant community of some substance had been created not merely in New York, but also in many of the larger immigrant communities in North America. The fact that many of these leaders, such as the Philadelphier, the Brownsviller, and the Bostoner, were publicly identified with their North American place of residence rather than their European places of origin seems to indicate as well that there was a process of Americanization taking place, even among those who must be considered to have been most resistant to “America” and all it stood for. Thus, many of these Hasidic rabbis acquired a command of the English language. Some, like the Boyaner Rebbe, did so through a daily reading of the *New York Times*.⁶⁴ Others had to deal with seemingly non-Hasidic events such as Fourth of July picnics and ladies’ auxiliary gatherings.⁶⁵

The evidence that has been presented here, while far from comprehensive, is, arguably I think, sufficient for us to understand that we are dealing with a reasonably widespread phenomenon of pre-World War II Hasidic life in North America. This understanding adds to our ability to nuance the complex phenomenon of Jewish immigration to North America in two ways. First, it enriches our understanding of the religious life of the immigrants by factoring in Hasidism, which has not been given its full due. Second, and perhaps most important, it allows us an opportunity to examine the ways in which scholarship on the period of mass eastern European Jewish immigration to North America all too often did not see what it was not prepared to see.

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Notes

¹This was first presented at a conference on “The Jewish Immigrant Experience in North America” held in 2005 at the Centre for American Studies, University of Western Ontario. My thanks to Dr. Monda Halpern and all others responsible for this conference. I would also like to thank Jonathan Sarna for some helpful suggestions that greatly improved this article.

²Cited in Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 177.

³For a review essay on the scholarly literature on Hasidism in North America, see Janet Belcove-Shalin, "Introduction," *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies of Hasidic Jews in America*, Janet Belcove-Shalin, ed., Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

⁴For a discussion of Rabbi Schneersohn's escape from Europe and entry into the United States, see Bryan Mark Rigg, *Rescued from the Reich: How One of Hitler's Soldiers Saved the Lubavitcher Rebbe*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

⁵Cf. Ira Robinson, "The First Hasidic Rabbis in North America," *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume 44, 1992, pp. 501–515; id., "An Identification and a Correction," *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume 47, 1995, pp. 331–332; Cf. Steven Lapidus, "New Galicia: Hasidic Rabbis and Rebbes in Prewar Canada," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, Volume 12, pp. 1–30.

⁶Lloyd P. Gartner, s.v. "Hasidism," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Ramat-Gan, 1970, Volume 7, Column 1399.

⁷Cf. Jeffrey Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, Hoboken, NJ, KTAV, 1996; Kimmy Caplan, *Orthodoxy in the New World: Immigrant Rabbis and Preaching in America, 1881–1924* [Hebrew], Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2002; Ira Robinson, *Rabbis and Their Community: Studies in the Eastern European Orthodox Rabbinate in Montreal, 1896–1930*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007.

⁸Ada Rappoport-Albert, "Hagiography With Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," in *Essays in Jewish Historiography*, Ada Rappoport-Albert, ed., Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1991, pp. 119–159; Nahum Karlinsky, "Between Historiography and Biography: the Beginning of Hasidic Orthodox Historiography" [Hebrew], *Zion*, Volume 63, 1998, pp. 189–212.

⁹Ira Robinson, "Hasidic Hagiography and Jewish Modernity," in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Haim Yerushalmi*, Elishava Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers, eds., Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1998, pp. 405–412; Cf. Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.

¹⁰Cf. Pierre Ancil, "Introduction," in *Le Mouvement ouvrier juif au Canada, 1904–1920*, Simon Belkin, traduit du Yiddish par Pierre Ancil, Sillery: Septentrion, 1999, p. 17ff.

¹¹Cf. Ruth Wisse, I. L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991, pp. 55–59.

¹²Dan Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of the Modern Jewish Literary Imagination*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000, p. 8. The same could be said of Shalom Aleichem. Cf. David Roskies, "An-sky, Sholem Aleichem, and the Master Narrative of Russian Jewry," in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 39.

¹³For a decidedly anti-Hasidic interpretation of eastern European Jewish history, see Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967, pp. 374–394. Raphael Mahler, in his *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985; translated from the Yiddish by Eugene Orenstein and from the Hebrew by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein), deals extensively with opposition to Hasidism in the nineteenth century on the part of Jewish advocates of the Jews adapting to the standards and mores of western civilization.

¹⁴"Hasidim, Hasidism," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–1910, Volume 6, pp. 255–256, accessed at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

¹⁵This stereotype is reflected in Steven Hertzberg's study of Atlanta Jewry, in which he stated: "The Hasidim tended to be less learned and sophisticated than the Mitnagedim." *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1815*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978, p. 64.

¹⁶Yehuda Rosenthal, “*Perakim be-Toledot ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi ha-Mizrah Eropei be-Shikago*,” *Pinkas Chicago*, Simon Rawidowicz, ed., Chicago: 1952, p. 16, note 47.

¹⁷Y.E. Bernstein, *The Jews in Canada (In North America): An Eastern European View of the Montreal Jewish Community in 1884*, Canadian Jewish Studies Chapbook Series No. 1, Montreal: Hungry I Books, 2004, p. 18. Translated from the Hebrew by Ira Robinson.

¹⁸*The American Hebrew*, March 17, 1893, p. 66.

¹⁹Robinson, “The Prehistory of a Legal Classic: The Origins of the *Mishnah Berurah*,” presented at Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, 2003; Cf. Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 151ff.

²⁰Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “Hasidism, Havurot, and the Jewish Street,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Volume 10, Winter, 2004, pp. 20–54.

²¹In a certain sense, this problem is similar to the scholarly debate on the Jewish identity of the conversos of Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For some scholars, the conversos did not fulfill classical rabbinic definitions of Jewishness and hence were not to be considered “Jewish.” For others, applying different criteria of “Jewishness” yielded significantly different results. See Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999; *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1981 (translated into English by Yael Guiladi); Rene Levine Melammed, *A Question of Identity: Iberian Conversos in Historical Perspective*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

²²Cf. Arthur Hertzberg, “The American Jew and His Religion,” in *Understanding American Judaism*, Jacob Neusner, ed., p. 14; M. Herbert Danzger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 24; Aaron Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972, pp. 8, 10; Michael R. Weissner, *A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanschaften in the New World*, New York: Basic Books, 1985, p. 14; Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada*, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Denys, 1990, p. 122. I would like to thank my student, Steven Lapidus, for these references.

²³Milton Doroshkin, *Yiddish in America: Social and Cultural Foundations*, Teaneck, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1965, pp. 142–143.

²⁴Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy*, p. 81; Sarna, *American Judaism*, p. 167; Charles Liebman, *Aspects of the Religious Behavior of American Jews*, New York: KTAV, 1974, pp. 26–28, 36–37; Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, pp. 123–124.

²⁵Rischin, *The Promised City*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 104.

²⁶Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, New York: Schocken Books, 1973, p. 36ff.; Cf. Pinchas Giller, “Between Poland and Jerusalem: Kabbalistic Prayer in Early Modernity,” *Modern Judaism*, Volume 24, Number 3, 2004, pp. 226–250.

²⁷Caplan, *Orthodoxy in the New World*, p. 72ff.

²⁸Stephen Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980, pp. 164–166.

²⁹This was certainly the case in Montreal. See Ira Robinson, “The Kosher Meat War and the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, 1922–1925,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Volume 22, Number 2, 1990, pp. 41–53.

³⁰“Directory of Local Organizations,” pp. 185–490. Accessed at http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1900_1901_4_NatlOrgs.pdf.

³¹*The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917–1918*, New York: Kehilla, 1918, pp. 145–285.

³²Ada Green and Judi Langer-Surnamer Caplan, "Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers Project Survey of State and Local Historical Records (1939) Church Records Jewish-Synagogue: Introduction." Accessed at <http://home.att.net/~landsmanshaft/wpaform.htm>.

³³The same listing contains twelve other *Sfard* congregations located in Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Louisville, Baltimore, St. Louis, Manchester, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee, plus two *Nusach Ari* congregations in Baltimore and Philadelphia.

³⁴The Hasidic courts represented in the names include Vishnitz, Kaidanow, Stolin, Slonim, Kobrin, Bayon [Boyan?], Rizhin (2), Czortkov (2), Trisk, and Karlin.

³⁵There were none listed for either Queens or Staten Island.

³⁶Another Hasidic liturgy, closely related to *Nusach Sfard*, and identified primarily with Chabad Hasidism.

³⁷On communications, see Menahem Blondheim, "*Ha-Rabanut ha-Ortodoxit Megale 'et Amerika: Ha-Geografia shel ha-Ruah be-Mitavim shel Tikshoret*," in *Be-Ikvot Kolumbus: Amerika, 1492–1992*, M. Eliav-Pladon, ed., Jerusalem: 1997, pp. 483–511. Id., "'Vela-Shom'im Yin'am: Ha-Derasha ha-Ortodoxit be-Arzo ha-Berit beyn Heyza Rabanit le-Bikush 'Ammami,'" in *Ha-Tarbut ha-'Ammami: Kovez Ma'amarim*, B.Z. Kedar, ed., Jerusalem: 1996, pp. 277–304; Jonathan Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881–1914," *American Jewish History*, Volume 71, 1981, pp. 256–268; Ira Robinson, "A Global Shtetl: American Orthodox Rabbis in the Early Twentieth Century and Their World Wide Web of Communication," Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History, 2004. Id., "The Globalization of Diaspora Communications Among Jews at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: An Analysis of Schmu'el N. Gottlieb's *Ohole-Schem*," presented at Jewish Diasporas: Myths and Realities, York University, 2005.

³⁸M. Freeman, *Fifty Years of Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: Mid-City Press, 1943, pp. 30, 37. In Yiddish.

³⁹Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, pp. 97–98.

⁴⁰On early Hasidic life in Boston, see Seth Farber, "Between Brooklyn and Brookline: American Hasidism and the Evolution of the Bostoner Hasidic Tradition," *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume 52, 2000, pp. 34–53.

⁴¹*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Volume 7, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–1906, p. 468, s.v. "Kentucky."

⁴²Robinson, "First Hasidic Rabbis in North America," p. 504.

⁴³Yudel Rosenberg, *Ha-Keriah ha-Kedosha*, New York: Rosenbeg Printing Co., 1919, p. 9. On Rosenberg, see Ira Robinson, "Kabbalist and Communal Leader: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg and the Canadian Jewish Community," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, Volume 1, 1993, pp. 41–58.

⁴⁴M.G. Geshuri, "*He-Hasidut ve-Niguneha*," in *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Warsaw Volume*, Itzhak Gruenbaum, ed., Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1953, p. 326; Cf. Weisser, *A Brotherhood of Memory*, p. 47.

⁴⁵Jerome R. Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 14–15. Similarly, R. David Elimelch Zanger left Cracow for Montreal on the advice of the Bobover Rebbe. *Toldoth Anshe Shem*, Oscar Z. Rand, ed., New York: Hever ha Ma'arekhet lal yad Heyrat toldet anshe shem, 1950, p. 106. It is claimed that R. Pinchas David Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe, was first encouraged to immigrate to America in the early 1900s by his uncle. Significantly, he is said to have resisted this suggestion and only immigrated to Boston in 1916 because he was unable to return to Palestine because of World War I. Hanoch Teller, *The Bostoner: Stories and Recollections From the Colorful Chassidic Court of the Bostoner Rebbe, Rabbi Levi I. Horowitz*, Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1990, p. 13.

⁴⁶August 11, 1935, p. 28.

⁴⁷Sh. Erdberg, "Rikhtige Rebbes—un Falshe," *Jewish Daily News*, November 2, 1927; Cf. J.D. Eisenstein, *Otsar Zikhrontai: Autobiography and Memoirs*, New York: 1929, p. 156.

⁴⁸In the case of Lubavitcher (Chabad) Hasidim, it is noteworthy that prior to the 1920s, individual Lubavitchers did come to the United States and form congregations, but the Lubavitcher rebbes discouraged such immigration until the 1920s. Shalom Dober Levin, *Toldois Chabad B'Artzois Ha'Bris*, Brooklyn: Kehot, 1988, pp. 7–8, 10, 15.

⁴⁹Joshua Heshl Rabinowitz, *Torat Avot*, New York: A. Reichtmann, 1926, introduction.

⁵⁰Erdberg, “*Rikhtige Rebbes—un Falshe*.”

⁵¹Singer’s article originally appeared on February 6, 1944; it was reprinted in Yiddish in *Forward*, December 31, 2004, pp. 10, 18–19.

⁵²“Schwartz in a Farce: ‘American Chasidim, a Satire on a Religious Sect,” *New York Times*, March 17, 1928.

⁵³Rabinowicz, *Encyclopedia*, Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1996, pp. 53, 63, 105–107, 117, 130, 140, 175, 221, 222, 276–278, 280, 289, 303, 329, 346–347, 365, 367, 389, 390–391, 406, 415, 418, 465, 483, 502–506, 509, 517–518, 526, 552.

⁵⁴On the Talner Hasidic Dynasty, see B. Rom, “*Semukhim la-‘ad le-‘olam*”, in *ha-Modia*, December 7, 1990, p. 10.

⁵⁵He visited congregation B’nai Reuven in Philadelphia for two weeks in 1915. That congregation hosted other visiting Hasidic spiritual leaders. See “Chasidik Tsadik,” *Jewish Exponent*, Philadelphia, January 16, 1914; Cf. M. Freeman, p. 47.

⁵⁶Advertisement in *Ha-Ivri*, February 11, 1916, p. 16. This advertisement was repeated in the same journal on March 24, April 7, and April 17, 1916. A similar advertisement, on behalf of the Radovitzer Rebbe, who was located at 293 East Third Street, was published in *Ha-Ivri* on March 17, 1916, p. 16, and repeated on April 17, 1916. R. David Mordecai Twersky also advertised his New Year greetings in *Ha-Ivri*, October 6, 1916, p. 14. There is an indication that Rabbi Twersky claimed a larger following than those who attended his synagogue. The 1918 Kehilla survey has Twersky’s Congregation K’hal Chasidim claim eight hundred members with a seating capacity in the synagogue of only two hundred. *Jewish Communal Register*, p. 213. For further evidence of Rabbi Twersky’s activism on behalf of European Hasidic leaders suffering during World War I, see “*Oyfruffun dem Talner Reb’n...*,” *Keneder Adler*, Montreal, May 2, 1915.

⁵⁷*Filadelfier ‘Idishe Anshtaltn un Zeyere Fibrer*, Y.L. Malamut, ed., Philadelphia, 1942/3, pp. 79–80.

⁵⁸Abraham J. Twersky, *Generation to Generation: Personal Recollections of a Chassidic Legacy*, Brooklyn: Traditional Press, 1986, p. ii.

⁵⁹*Ha-Ma’ayan*, Volume 14, number 19, February 12, 2000, accessed at <http://roshhashana.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/5760/terumah.html>

⁶⁰Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy*, p. 6ff; Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Silver Era in American Jewish Orthodoxy: Rabbi Eliezer Silver and His Generation*, Jerusalem: Feldheim; New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1981.

⁶¹Hindy Krohn, *The Way It Was: Touching Vignettes of Growing Up Jewish in the Philadelphia of Long Ago*, Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1989, p. 114.

⁶²Malamut, *Filadelfier*, pp. 80–81.

⁶³*New York Times*, April 28, 1938, p. 23

⁶⁴Mintz, *Hasidic People*, p. 18.

⁶⁵Robert Tabak, *The Transformation of Jewish Identity: The Philadelphia Experience*, Ann Arbor: UMI, 1990, p. 173.

A Century of Medals, and Still Counting: Anniversaries of the Jews in America

Ira Rezak

One aspect of the anniversary celebrations of American Jewry (in 1904–05, 1954–55, and 2004–05) was the production of commemorative medallions. An examination of their content, of what is known about the artists who designed them, and of the circumstances in which they were commissioned provides a window into the process whereby American Jewry reflected upon both the antiquity of their settlement and the significance of their dual identity as Americans and Jews.

The idea of celebrating round-numbered anniversaries originated in antiquity — the Romans, for example, put “X” or “XX” on coins, denoting the number of years their magistrates or emperors had been in office; the theoretical one-thousandth anniversary of the Roman state was commemorated in the fourth century C.E. However, apart from the millennium of the year 1000, the idea of doing this sort of arithmetical-historical calculus seems to have been largely absent during the European Middle Ages until the papacy during the fourteenth century began to imitate the Hebrew biblical jubilee cycle of fifty-year intervals.¹ Universities, often with religious affiliations, picked up the round-numbered commemorative habit in the sixteenth century, and from the seventeenth century onward yet another religious group, the Protestants, began regularly to memorialize the centennial anniversaries of their Reformation. Pertinent to our subject, moreover, all of these postmedieval cohorts increasingly commemorated their events by the issuance of medals.

Medals imitate but are subject to fewer restrictions than coins of the realm and therefore may be made of any size or substance and at the initiative of any person or institution; they are not, as coins remain even today, the exclusive prerogative of sovereigns and states. Medals are metallic monuments, like statues, but are far less expensive to manufacture. They are readily replicable and hence are available to be distributed by their sponsors as honors, as signs of common identity among self-defined groups, as personal gifts, as informative media and propaganda, and much later, especially by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as commercially available memorabilia. A medal held in the hand has substance, projects a sense of permanence, and — by virtue of a still-persistent analogy with coinage, its original model — a *caché*, a sense of official importance. Remarkably though, in America, and indeed in Europe, medals commemorating *national* anniversaries were a very late development. Not until the centennials of the American and French revolutions in 1876 and 1879,

respectively, were anniversaries of these signal events occasions for substantial public celebration or for the issue of commemorative medals. Celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America in 1892 was the occasion for a World's Fair and for the manufacture of hundreds of different medals, but there had been no precedent at the three-hundredth anniversary; the event was a novel project. Thus, the decision to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Jewish settlement in America in 1905 may be seen as paralleling an impulse that had religious antecedents of many hundreds of years but nationalist precedents that were very recent indeed; one may say they were a modern development.

According to an official account,² the entire project for having a 250th anniversary celebration was first broached in late February 1905 both at a grass-roots level in New York City at the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel, and at a national level at the thirteenth meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society in Cincinnati. Specific planning for public celebrations, which were to focus on the official Dutch acceptance of the settlement of the Jews in New York in April 1655, then began in April 1905 and proceeded expeditiously within a committee of New Yorkers under the aegis of Louis Marshall. The highlight of the commemoration was a grand event on Thanksgiving Day of the same year, held in New York's Carnegie Hall in the presence of luminaries both of the Jewish-American world and of local, state, and national secular authorities. Ex-President Grover Cleveland and banker and philanthropist Jacob Schiff, among many others, addressed those gathered at the event. A national general committee was also formed to coordinate the numerous celebratory events and speeches that occurred that same year elsewhere in the United States. It may be noted that the idea of a commemorative medal was not part of the original plan. Rather, a public monument was to have been erected at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Ninth Street in New York at the southeast corner of Central Park, but this intention was set aside in November 1905 so that the funds already collected for the monument might be diverted to the relief of Jews then suffering from pogroms in Russia.³ Only then did the idea of a medal as a sort of alternative memorial emerge. Schiff defrayed the entire cost of this project, which involved a \$1,200 fee to the medalist, \$3.25 each for the 284 medals struck in bronze, \$10 each for the 36 silver examples, \$300 each for the two gold specimens, presumably an additional few hundreds of dollars for the processing of dies to strike the medals, and incidental manufacturing and packaging costs. The gold medals were presented to President Theodore Roosevelt and to ex-President Grover Cleveland. The silver specimens were given to other dignitaries and selected Jewish and secular historical societies and museums. The bronzes were distributed similarly to lesser officials who had organized the public celebration and to lesser collections and organizations.⁴

The monument originally conceived was to have been the work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, then America's preeminent sculptor, and Isidore Konti (1862–1938), a Jewish immigrant.⁵ After the abandonment of the plan for a monument, however, it was Konti who alone designed the medal that came to be produced for the celebration. Konti, the second of eleven children, had been born to Hungarian Jewish parents temporarily living in Vienna. He was raised in Szombathely in Hungary but, after his artistic talent was recognized, he returned at age sixteen to study at the Imperial Academy in Vienna. After two years in Rome and sculptural commissions from 1888 to 1892 in Vienna, Hamburg, Budapest, and Berlin, he immigrated to the United States in 1892, just in time to gain employment within the circle of Saint-Gaudens as a sculptor on the enormous Chicago World's Fair project of 1892–1893. Thereafter, he became prominent in American artistic circles, the recipient of many private and public commissions, a popular and engaged individual, the peer of the prominent artists of his and earlier generations, but also the beloved mentor of many talented artists soon to rise to eminence in the United States. Konti's sculpture was largely modeled in the round, ranging from memorial tablets and small statuary to bas-reliefs, architectural elements, private funerary, and major public monuments. He made but three assays into the medallic field, the medal for the 250th anniversary in 1905 being his first. This was followed by the *Isidor Memorial Medal*, a prize commissioned by the National Academy of Design in 1907; and *There's No Place Like Home* in 1910, one of twelve medals issued by the Circle of Friends of the Medallion, a private art collectors' group. It may be noted that, apart from portrait busts of his beloved mother, Rosalie Konti, and of Emmanuel Lehman, one of the founders of the investment banking firm Lehman Brothers, the medal of 1905 seems alone among more than one hundred of Konti's published works to have in any way been linked to his own Jewish origins.

Konti modeled the two-sided 250th anniversary medal in the beaux arts style pioneered in France in the late nineteenth century that was nearing its peak of popularity in Europe and the United States. It was reproduced with a three-inch diameter and displayed the soft, low relief and graceful deployment of allegorical female figures so characteristic of the medallic genre in this period.⁶ On the obverse side of the medal are standing figures of Liberty bearing a sword and of Justice as a seated figure holding a scroll of the law, both elegantly draped and basking in rays of sunlight, triumphant over a nude and cowering male figure in the foreground, representing Intolerance defeated. A circular inscription states: "Commemorating the 250 Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in the United States." The sculptor's full name, Isidore Konti Sc(ulptor), also appears on this side. The reverse of the medal features a standing figure of History in flowing garments, holding a tablet inscribed with the dates 1655 and 1905 and protected by a hovering American eagle; a young tree is also shown taking root

in American soil. The inscription here is *ההירות מולדת השמים צדק ומשפט מכון כסא*ה, which may be freely translated as: “God Gives Birth to Freedom, Righteousness and Justice are the Foundation of His Throne”; the latter phrase is a variation of Psalms 97:2 (where *כסאו* is the final word). Once again, the artist’s name is recorded here as “IK 1905.” This medal captures in both sentiment and style the optimistic perspective of well-assimilating American Jews of the period — the perspective of both the artist and the patrons of the commemorative project, nearly all of whom were Jews of either German or long-established Sephardic origin. The defeat of Intolerance is presented as a *fait accompli*; the then-current social reality of the millions of newly arriving poor and persecuted eastern European immigrants is not in evidence.

Fewer than fifty years later, the idea of the “First Settlement” had been moved back a year to coincide not, as previously, with the acceptance by the Dutch West India Company of Jews as permanent residents in New Amsterdam in 1655, but with the actual date of arrival of the Jews in the colony in the previous year. With the path of the 250th anniversary commemoration already trodden, the idea for a 300th anniversary celebration was bruited as early as 1950, and the American-Jewish Tercentenary Committee to plan its details was established by 1952 under the leadership of Ralph Samuel, former president of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and chairman of the American Jewish Committee.⁷ A subordinate group, the Tercentenary Fine Arts Committee, was appointed with Nancy Proskauer Dryfoos (1918–1991) as chair; it organized an extensive touring exhibition devoted exclusively to contemporary art by more than one hundred American Jewish artists. Ranging from drawings and paintings to sculptures large and small, the traveling exhibition contained much material that was “definitely Jewish” in its thematic content but also landscapes and more abstract works; it toured the country during 1954–1955. Dryfoos, herself a noted and prolific sculptor in both stone and metal, a fellow of the National Sculpture Society, and later the president of the National Association of Women Artists, was also commissioned to create a commemorative medal by the American-Jewish Tercentenary Committee. As was the case with Konti, Dryfoos had had no prior track record of medallic production before this commission and, indeed, she is known to have had only two subsequent medal commissions, both in 1959. One was a portrait of her own father, Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, for an eponymous award of the United Jewish Appeal–Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. The other was a portrait of Naomi Lehman for an award by a memorial foundation to individuals active in Jewish child care services.⁸ The tercentenary memorial Dryfoos designed was manufactured by the Medallic Art Company of New York as a two-sided medal three inches in diameter, but for reasons that are obscure, it was produced only in bronze, one thousand pieces being made available for distribution to Jewish and non-Jewish dignitaries and institutions.⁹ The iconography was constrained by a decision to

feature the official logo of the celebration, designed by William Metzger, as the device on the reverse side of the medal: a modernistic menorah meant to evoke the American flag, with its candles representing the stripes and five-pointed stars as its flames. An inscription surrounding the image says: "American Jewish Tercentenary 1654–1954." The medal's obverse design is of a family unit, consisting of a man, woman, and child standing together in front of a map of the United States in a style that may be described as owing much to the muscular "socialist realism" that since the 1930s had characterized public monumental sculpture throughout the United States and Europe. The inscription, "Man's Opportunities and Responsibilities Under Freedom," also presents a generic quality that seems but little related to the particularity of Jewish experience in America. The only concession to Judaism on this side are the dates in Hebrew, התי"ד-התשי"ד, (5414–5714) and the medalist's monogram, "ND."

Profiting from earlier experiences, by 2002, well in advance of the 2004 event, the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History was formed of national and Jewish historical and archival institutions, and "Celebrate 350, Jewish Life in America 1654–2004," chaired by Robert S. Rifkind, became the umbrella body for the planning and promotion of educational and commemorative programming nationwide.¹⁰ However, the medal ultimately created to commemorate this anniversary had a somewhat different, less formal initiation than those of fifty and one hundred years earlier. In 2003, during a telephone conversation, this essay's author and Mel Wacks, a person experienced in the production and sale of medals of Jewish interest, explored the desirability of a medal to celebrate the 350th anniversary. As numismatists, both were familiar with the two preceding medals and aware that issuing a third in the sequence would be both logical and desirable.¹¹ The reissue of a medal that some years earlier had depicted the moment in 1654 when the ship from Recife had landed in New Amsterdam's harbor seemed one option, but it was evident that there was more to commemorate than a single "Plymouth Rock" moment some 350 years before. The Jews in America had not simply arrived, they had interacted with, and indeed, influenced the development and identity of the United States for hundreds of years.

From this conversation, two ideas emerged: first, that any such medal ought somehow to evoke the ongoing relationship between the United States and its Jewish population; and second, that insofar as possible, the principal designs to be chosen for the medal should avoid certain traditional icons (the menorah, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, the Star of David) whose frequent use on medals issued by Jewish organizations over the years had somewhat depleted their original symbolic force. It was also clear that a commemorative medal could be manufactured either as a private venture to be offered commercially for sale or, as the prior two medals had been, produced exclusively as an official issue of the umbrella Celebrate 350 Committee.

In the end, after extensive consultation with Celebrate 350, it was decided to blend the two approaches. The medal would be privately designed and produced but with the imprimatur of the Celebrate 350 body, which would ultimately acquire and distribute the majority of the medals. Thus, official permission was granted to imprint the official logo of the celebration, a miniature menorah, on the medals that were to be made.

A small committee consisting of this essay's author; Daniel M. Friedenber, doyen of American Jewish medal experts; Robert S. Rifkind, chair of Celebrate 350; and Mel Wacks was formed and set out to identify an outstanding artist and suitable designs for the proposed medal. At this point, the generous financial support of David Berley¹² enabled this committee to announce a monetary prize of \$2,500 to encourage the submission of artistic drawings and models from which the final designs would be selected. The explicit rules for this contest required, first, that the abovementioned symbolic clichés not be used as principal iconographic elements and, second, that the medal's overall program address the engagement of Jews with America over time and not simply depict their first moment of arrival on these shores. Apart from these constraints, the committee did not mandate any particular iconographic program, preferring to allow artists the broadest latitude for expression. By early 2004, a design emerged that met these criteria admirably and artistically and that, with slight modification, the committee finally accepted and had produced. The artist who conceived the winning designs was Dana Krinsky, a young Israeli woman (b. 1969) who was trained at St. Martin's College of Art and Design in London and at Avni Institute of Art in Tel Aviv. Her preferred medium has been small sculpture and medals; her work has garnered several prizes and been well received in private and public collections. She has represented Israel at international congresses and lives, works, and teaches art in Israel.¹³

The 350th anniversary medal of 2004, once again three inches in diameter, presents texts and images that illustrate the relationship between America and its Jews. The obverse design depicts a group of immigrants, their variegated Old World costumes hinted at, clustered together as if at the prow of a boat, expectantly facing a new horizon across waves and lit by stars, the waves and stars also suggesting an American flag. The text of Leviticus, "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land," chosen as the motto for the Liberty Bell,¹⁴ is inscribed, along with its Hebrew original וְקִרְאתֶם דֶּרֶךְ בְּאֵרֶץ. The reverse of the medal displays a bold but nonspecific cityscape, an image that also echoes the crenellations of Jerusalem; Jewish settlement in America, as in the Old World, has long been predominantly urban. The words "350 Years of Jewish Life in America, 1654–2004," together with a small incused image of the menorah logo of the national celebration announce the larger theme. In the background, excerpts appear from the stirring words of George Washington, addressed in a letter to the Jews of Newport in 1790, which assure them, and subsequent

immigrant generations, that America offers a tolerant and safe haven to the “stock of Abraham” and to all who “demean themselves as good citizens.”¹⁵ A total of one thousand bronze, ninety-four silver, and sixty-two gold-plated silver medals were struck by the Highland Mint of Melbourne, Florida,¹⁶ of which the majority were distributed to officials, dignitaries, and institutions, as with previous commemorations, primarily by the Celebrate 350 Committee and the American Jewish Historical Society. In fact, a gold medal was not only the public gift of the Celebrate 350 Committee to President George W. Bush on the occasion of his attendance at the 350th Anniversary National Dinner on September 14, 2005, in Washington, DC, but this image also served as the principal icon displayed on the podium as backdrop and on the covers of the souvenir program for this festive event.

The styles and formulae of medallic commemoration seen as appropriate in 1905, 1954, and 2004 appear to have been quite varied, even as the situations and identities of their patrons, artists, and manufacturers were indeed rather different. The organizing committee of 1905 entrusted the design of its medal to an immigrant whose artistic training in Europe favored a level of abstraction in representation that was also fashionable among American elites as well. Actual people, Jewish or even American, were therefore not to be depicted directly. Rather, the participation of Jews in America for a quarter of a millennium was presented as having been enabled by the general beneficence fostered by the freedom and justice that were conceived as the essential and defining features of the United States. One may readily imagine that those American Jews who approved this imagery, many themselves immigrants, were sensitive, as was the artist, to their good fortune in dwelling in America at a time when the very funds that had so recently been collected to memorialize American Jewry needed to be urgently diverted for the relief of European pogrom victims. Since biblical quotations, even ones in Hebrew characters, were well within the normal range of Christian medals of the age, Jewish particularism was granted no place in the iconography of the medal produced in 1905 to celebrate 250 years of Jewish settlement in America.

The medal of 1954, too, seems to have eschewed reference to recognizable Jews in America, offering as a solitary Jewish image an abstract menorah more suggestive of an adaptable modernity than of historical tradition. The artist, born in America, though seemingly well established here both socially and artistically, clearly chose human figures, a map, and an inscription that all emphasized the secular aspects of the hyphenated “Jewish-American” identity. Once again, this time in the aftermath of World War II and the then still hardly discussed Holocaust, the committee that commissioned this medal approved the graphic expression of the loyalty, gratitude, and responsibilities that American Jews owed their adopted land.

The medal devised for the 350th anniversary offers a different perspective, in part because it was designed by a non-American but probably mainly because of the greater self-assurance of present-day Jews, both those who commissioned the medal and those of the committee who approved it as a central symbol of the main celebratory event. The notion that Jews had originated as immigrants from abroad, that they had actively sought out a new horizon, and that they had arrived wearing costumes suggesting the diversity of their origins are themes that found no place on the earlier medals and whose presence reflects a greater security in their sense of identity than was possible for Jews in America fifty or one hundred years ago. The urban skyline, evoking both the crenelations of Jerusalem's walls and great American cities, is still another feature suggesting the confidence that present-day Jews enjoy in their identities as U.S. citizens who have an additional ancient heritage.

Medals serve many purposes as honors, rewards, and commemorative souvenirs — among others — but above all, they are themselves active participants in a centuries-old tactile tradition of personal gift. Having passed from hand to hand, from donor to recipient, they are intimate at initial presentation and thus incorporate some sense of that moment in later memory. Unlike larger and more imposing monuments, fortunate recipients personally possess them and derive private pride and ongoing pleasure from them. Nevertheless, the very notion of capturing a historic moment, of compressing and encompassing its significance within a disc of metal, is an idea that, having resonated for centuries, itself provides and reinforces a sense of continuity. These three medals, though issued over the course of a century, concur that it is the American promise of freedom and opportunity that has drawn Jewish immigrants to these shores. Viewed retrospectively as historical artifacts, they might be held simply to reflect time-specific traditions of history and of iconography. Seen as part of a medallic *series* yet to be completed, however, they may also serve as markers of the evolving identity of American Jewry.

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Notes

¹Philip Attwood, Curator of Medals, British Museum; Dr. Alan Stahl, Curator of Numismatics, Princeton University Library: personal communications. J.O. Sweeny and R. Turfboer, "Tempus in Nummis," *Numismatics International*, Volume 2, 1992, pp. 157, ff.

²The 250th anniversary of the settlement of the Jews in the United States, addresses delivered at Carnegie Hall, New York, on Thanksgiving Day 1905, together with other selected addresses and proceedings, 1906, pp. v–x and frontispiece illustration.

³Dr. Uriel Paul Federbush, “The First National Jewish-American Medal,” in *The Numismatist*, May 1976, p. 968, as documented in archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, minutes of the Anniversary Executive Committee, October 16, 1905, and December 11, 1905.

⁴Ibid, p. 968–969, Archives AJHS, February 1, 1906.

⁵Mary Jean Smith Madigan, *The Sculpture of Isidore Konti 1862–1938*, Exhibition Catalog: The Hudson River Museum, January 26–March 30, 1975, 1974, unpaginated, with 119 illustrations. This is the principal source for information on Konti, his personal history, and career. See also National Sculpture Society, *Contemporary American Sculpture*, 1929, pp.185–187

⁶For an appreciation of Konti and the 250th anniversary medal, see Barbara A. Baxter, *The Beaux-Arts Medal in America*, New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1987, pp. 72–73. The manufacturer of this medal is not given in any reference available to this author or to those who have previously recorded its history. Dick Johnson, an expert in the history of American medallic production facilities, suggests Joseph K. Davison’s Sons (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), The Robbins Company (Attleboro, Massachusetts), or Bastian Brothers (Rochester, New York) as the likeliest to have manufactured the Konti medal.

⁷Cited in Dr. Uriel Paul Federbush, “Three Hundred Years: The Second National Jewish-American Medal,” in *The Numismatist*, December 1977, pp. 2476–2477, as documented in the Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, Papers of the American Jewish Tercentenary Committee, 1953.

⁸Information concerning the career and art works of Nancy P. Dryfoos, including personal correspondence, art brochures, photographs, and newspaper clippings, is available in the holdings of the Archives of American Art in the Smithsonian Institution. Much of this material is duplicated in the files of the American Jewish Archives.

⁹Federbush, “Three Hundred Years,” 1977, p. 2480.

¹⁰The Final Report of the Celebrate 350 Committee may be found online at <http://www.americanjewisharchives.org/aja/links/Cel350.FinalReport.pdf>. See, particularly, pp. 3–5 for the organization of the committee and pp. 14–16 for a partial listing of recipients of the commemorative medal.

¹¹This essay’s author has first-hand familiarity with the sequence of ideas, planning, and actions concerning the creation of the 350th anniversary medal. That familiarity has been supplemented by personal communications from Mel Wacks. See also Mel Wacks, “350th Anniversary of Jewish Life in America Medal,” May 1, 2003, accessed online at <http://www.amuseum.org/jahf/news/newmedal.html>.

¹²President, Walter & Samuels, Inc., New York.

¹³Additional information about Dana Krinsky, as well as illustrations of many of her other works of art, may be found online at her website: <http://www.math.tau.ac.il/~shimsh/medals.html>.

¹⁴Though the fame of the Liberty Bell dates from the time of the American Revolution, the bell (with its later famous inscription) was commissioned in 1751 by the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly, cast in London, and delivered to be hung in the State House, only later to become Independence Hall, in 1752. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Volume 7, 1986, p 332.

¹⁵The full text of Washington’s letter and that of the Newport Congregation’s congratulatory letter to the president that preceded it on August 17, 1790, and that indeed originated much of the since famous characterization of the United States as giving “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,” may be found in *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654–1875*, Morris U. Schappes, ed., New York: The Citadel Press, 1950, pp. 79–81.

¹⁶Mel Wacks, personal communication.

The American Jewish Community Anniversary Proclamations

Frederic Krome

Throughout its more than 350-year history in America, the Jewish community has, at times, felt it necessary to issue public pronouncements about important issues. These pronouncements have taken various forms. They might be issued by individuals speaking on behalf of the entire Jewish community, such as the famous 1790 letter to President George Washington, signed by Moses Seixas; or they might be official positions issued by organizations — for example, the American Jewish Committee’s 1914 statement in support of American neutrality as World War I raged across Europe, to name just one. Very often these pronouncements were part of an attempt by members of the American Jewish community to create a unified front, explicating to the larger American community the Jewish stance on a specific issue or event. Just as often, however, the attempt to speak with one voice failed.

An examination of the proclamations issued during the celebration of the American Jewish tercentenary (1954–55) and the 350th anniversary provides interesting insights into which groups “spoke” on behalf of the American Jewish community, as well as furnishing a window into what communal leaders considered important.

The first document reproduced here (see insert Plates 9, 10, and 11) is from the tercentenary celebration of 1954–1955, and it is signed not only by a representation of the national tercentenary organization but by representatives of all the major American rabbinic organizations (Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox). Its content reflects a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunities America has provided for the Jews. As it was written in a post-Holocaust world, it should not surprise us that the writers made explicit reference to Jewish suffering: “In some lands across the seas our brethren have felt the searing flame of prejudice, persecution and death.” Such a statement challenges the old conventional wisdom that American Jewry did not discuss the fate of European Jews until many years later. The proclamation also charged the American Jewish community to help succor Holocaust survivors and to support the new State of Israel (founded only six years earlier). Finally, the document was written in three languages — English, Hebrew, and Yiddish — reflecting the predominant lingua franca of American Jews (English), its historic ties (Hebrew), and the salience of a Yiddish culture among a large segment of the population.

The second document is from the 350th anniversary celebration. Like the tercentenary proclamation, it is primarily the work of the religious leadership of the American rabbinate, although now the Reconstructionist movement has

joined the three older denominations in signing the proclamation, reflecting that movement's standing in the American scene.

While there are certain similarities between the two documents — especially in reference to the protection afforded by the U.S. Constitution and to the prejudice experienced by Jews in other lands — there are some striking differences. For example, while the 350th proclamation notes that “Even as we have worked for the well-being of people abroad,” it does not make an explicit reference to the Holocaust or Israel, reflecting the passage of time and the changing focus of the American Jewish community. In addition, this document appears only in English; the absence of Hebrew and Yiddish is particularly interesting. While the number of Yiddish speakers has declined since 1954, the vitality of Hebrew as a living language has grown. Indeed, in addition to being the official language of the State of Israel, it is taught in Jewish supplemental and day schools in the United States. Hebrew has also become an acceptable foreign language component in some public high schools and in many American universities. The absence of Hebrew in the 350th proclamation is one issue that future historians will likely grapple with.

We are publishing these documents for the edification of our readers, many of whom participated in 350th events but may not have had the opportunity to read the proclamation. Fewer still have enjoyed the opportunity to compare the 2004 document with the 1954 proclamation. We hope it will also prove useful in 2054, when American Jewry celebrates its quatercentenary.

Frederic Krome served as managing editor of The American Jewish Archives Journal from 1998-2007 and is now Assistant Professor of History at Clermont College-University of Cincinnati.



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350 Years of American Jewish History:
A Commemorative Collection



Plate 1: "A Plan of the City and Environs of New York as they were in the Years 1742, 1743 and 1744. Drawn by DG in the 76th year of his age who had at this time a perfect and correct recollection of every part of the same." (1813)

David Grim (1737–1826) immigrated from Bavaria and was the proprietor of the popular Hessians Coffee House during the late eighteenth century, from which he observed the development of Manhattan Island as it evolved from a small town into the more familiar urban center we think of. He drew this map in 1813 when he was 76 years old.

The line of the buildings at the top contains an image titled "synagogue," a reference to the congregation known as Shearith Israel, whose building was then located on Mill Street. The imagery helps illustrate that at a time when the Jewish community of the United States was small, numbering only several hundred in both 1743 and 1813, New York was already known for its religious and cultural diversity.

(Courtesy New York Historical Society)

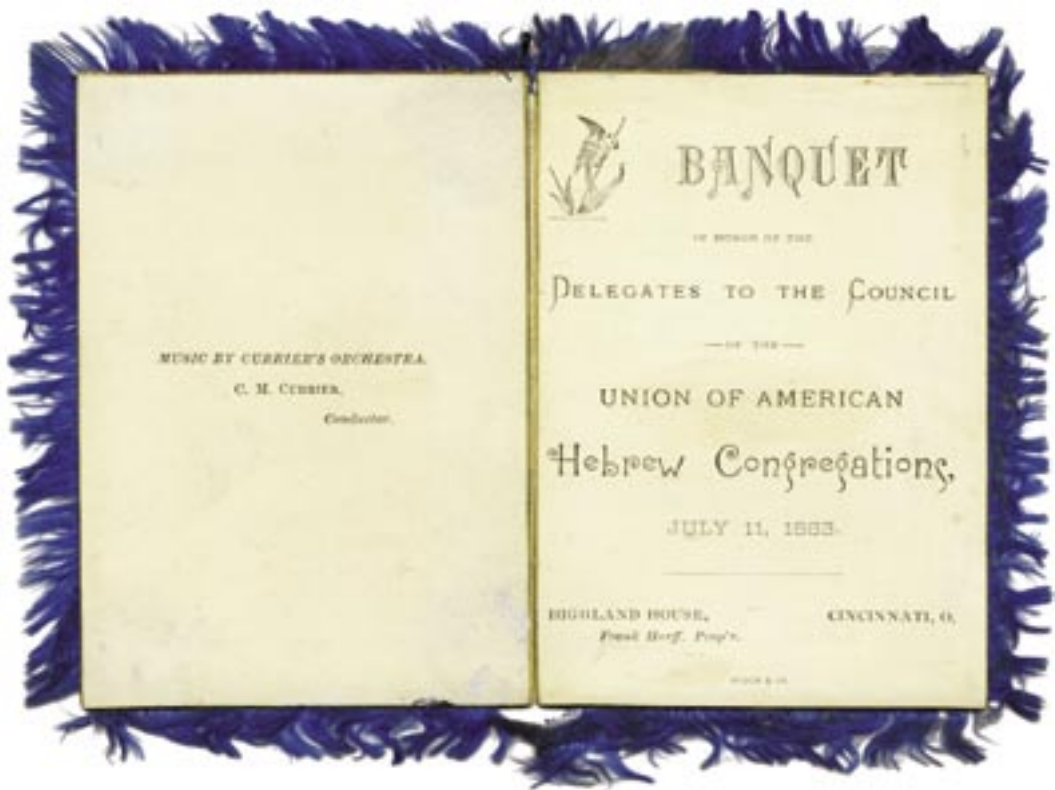


Plate 2: *The Island of Curaçao in the mid-seventeenth century was an important entrepôt for the Dutch Atlantic trading empire. Curaçao's Jewish community was founded during the first part of the seventeenth century, and a formal congregation has existed on the island since 1654.*

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Plate 3: Opening page of the calendar. The inside cover (right) bears a dedication to Rachel, wife of the master Jacob son of Joshua. The first page (left) is the calendar for the Hebrew month of Tishri. The five columns right to left list (1) the weekly Torah portions and Jewish holidays; (2) days of the week (in Yiddish); (3) Hebrew dates; (4) corresponding English dates according to the Gregorian calendar; (5) English months (in Yiddish orthography) and phases of the moon. (Courtesy Arnold and Dee Kaplan)



Plates 4 and 5: *Several copies of the original Trefa Banquet menu complete with plumage have survived. The attempt at elegance is somewhat betrayed by spelling errors in the French language listing of several of the dishes on the menu. The menu was also reprinted in the daily newspaper, The Cincinnati Enquirer, along with a detailed and upbeat evaluation of the grand event.*

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

MENU.

Little Neck Clams (Half Shell).
"Amontillado"
Sherry.

POTAGES.

Consommé Royal.

"Sauternes."

POISSONS.

Filet de Boef, aux Champignons.
Soft Shell Crabs,
à l'Américaine, Pommes Duchesse.
Salade of Shrimp.

"St. Julien."

ENTREE.

Sweet Breads, à la Môngole.
Petits Fois, à la Française.

"Deidesheimer."

RELEVÉE.

Poulets, à la Visconite.
Asperges Sautes, Vinaigrette Finesse
"Punch Romain."
Grenouilles à la Crème and Cauliflower.

ROTI.

Vol au Vents de Pigeons, à la Tyrolenne.
Salade de Salade.
"G. H. Mumm Extra Dry."

HORS-D'ŒUVRES.

Bouchées de Volaille, à la Reçeurs.
Olives Caviar, Sardelles de Hollande.
Brisettes au Supreme Tomatoes,
Mayonnaise.

SUCRES.

Ice Cream.
Assorted and Ornamented Cakes.

ENTREMENTS.

Fromages Variés. Fruits Variés.
"Martell Cognac." Cote Noir.



Plate 6: 1905 medallion (bronze, 76 mm diameter) for the 250th Anniversary of the American Jewish community.

The 1905 commemorative medal, struck in silver and gold as well as bronze, was designed by the noted Jewish-American sculptor Isidore Konti (1862–1938).

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Plate 7: 1954 medallion (bronze, 76 mm diameter) celebrating the Tercentenary (300th) Anniversary of the American Jewish community.

Produced for the Tercentenary of 1954–1955, this medallion was designed by Nancy Proskauer Dryfoos (1918–1991).

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Plate 8: 2004 medallion (bronze, 76 mm diameter) minted for the 350th Anniversary celebration of the establishment of the American Jewish community.

Designed by Dana Krinsky (b. 1969), this medallion, which was struck in silver and gold-plated silver as well as bronze, was issued to commemorate the 350th anniversary celebration held in 2004–2005.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

To Our Jewish Brethren in the United States of America

“PEACE BE WITH YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS”

BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU that in Elul 5714 (September 1954) the Jewish community of the United States will commemorate the 300th anniversary of Jewish settlement in this country.

BY THE GRACE OF GOD and under the protection of the Constitution of the United States, we have lived and prospered in this land. We have been an integral part of American life. We have worked with all other Americans in the never-ending search for the democratic way of life and for the light of faith. Our ancient prophetic ideals and the teachings of the sages have been foundation stones of this nation. Our work, our hopes, and above all, our living religion, have been among our proudest offerings to the American community.

IN SOME LANDS ACROSS THE SEAS our brethren have felt the searing flame of prejudice, persecution and death. We in America have had the sad yet inspiring opportunity to save the lives of scores of thousands—to bring comfort to the oppressed, to help in the making of a new and honored nation on the ancient soil of Israel, and to acquire a new recognition of our responsibility for human welfare in keeping with the ancient teachings of our faith. In some lands across the seas our brethren have been pressed to give up their religious beliefs and practices and to disappear in a well of namelessness. **BUT WITHIN THE HOME OF AMERICA** we have succeeded in preserving the unique identity of the Jewish religion, worshipping in keeping with our historic tradition; and we have preserved our ancient teachings, our ethics, and our religious ideals in the free climate of our nation. Our religion is strong, as our American loyalty is strong.

MINDFUL OF THESE BLESSINGS and with deep gratitude in our hearts to the God of Israel, who, in 1654, led our fathers to the shores of this great new land,

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM the period from Elul 5714 (September 1954) to the end of Siman 5715 (May 1955) as one of thanksgiving, prayer, study and celebration of the American Jewish Tercentenary.

WE CALL ON ALL OUR BRETHREN throughout the nation to participate in the observance of this anniversary; to offer thanks unto the Lord for the blessings bestowed on us in America; to pray for the continued peace and prosperity of our country and all its inhabitants and to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of our faith within the freedom of American democracy.

Samuel H. Goldstein
CHIEF, CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

Isaac L. Schacter
AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATION

Shalom S. Harlow
BOARDMAN, COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Henry Kaplan
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Alan S. Stein
LEADER OF CONGREGATION SHEVAH SHalom, NEW YORK

Philip Brundage
UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA

Maxwell R. Lurie
UNITED OF AMERICAN JEWISH CONGREGATIONS

Miriam Lurie
SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Plate 10: Although still heavily influenced by its east European immigrant origins, the lingua franca of American Jews was English.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Plate 11: *The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the revival of Hebrew as a modern spoken language both had a significant impact upon American Jewry.*

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Celebrate 350 Jewish Life in America 1654 ~ 2004

LET IT BE KNOWN that in Elul 5764 (September 2004) the Jewish community of the United States began a year long commemoration marking the 350th Anniversary of Jewish settlement in this country.

WITH THE HELP OF GOD and under the protection of the Constitution of the United States, we have lived and prospered in this land. We have been an integral part of American life. We have worked with all other Americans in the never-ending effort to keep secure the democratic way of life. Our ancient prophetic ideals and the teachings of our sages serve as cornerstones of this nation's values. Our work, our hopes, and above all, our living religion have been among our proudest offerings to the American community.

IN SOME LANDS ACROSS THE SEAS the Jewish people have felt the searing flame of prejudice, persecution and death. The American Jew has had the sad yet inspiring opportunity to bring comfort to the oppressed, the joyous opportunity to participate in the reconstitution of the Jewish state on the ancient soil of Israel, and the inescapable and ennobling responsibility to mend the broken places in our world.

EVEN AS WE HAVE WORKED FOR THE WELL-BEING OF OUR PEOPLE ABROAD, the Jewish people in America have struggled to preserve our noble heritage, our historic traditions, our ancient teachings, our ethics, and our spiritual ideals in the free climate of our nation.

MINDFUL OF OUR MANIFOLD BLESSINGS and with deep gratitude in our hearts to the God of Israel, Who, in 1654, led our forebears to the shores of this great new land,

WE HAVE PROCLAIMED the period from Elul 5764 (September 2004) through Elul 5765 (September 2005) to be one of special thanksgiving, prayer, study, reflection and celebration to mark the 350TH ANNIVERSARY OF JEWISH COMMUNAL LIFE IN AMERICA.

WE CALL ON ALL AMERICAN JEWRY to participate in the observance of this anniversary to thank God for the bountiful blessings that have been bestowed on us in this remarkable land. Let us express our collective hope that peace, security, and prosperity will reign in our nation for all. May the principles of freedom and liberty that have been the lodestar values of this great Republic continue to radiate their blessings on our nation.


CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS
Rabbi Harry Dreyfus, President


RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
Rabbi Perry Raphael Rank, President


RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA
Rabbi Dale Polakoff, President


RECONSTRUCTIONIST RABBINICAL ASSOCIATION
Rabbi Brand Rosen, President

Plate 12: *Unlike the Tercentenary, the Celebrate 350 proclamation was printed only in English.*

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

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The American Jewish Archives Journal

Volume LVII (2005)

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