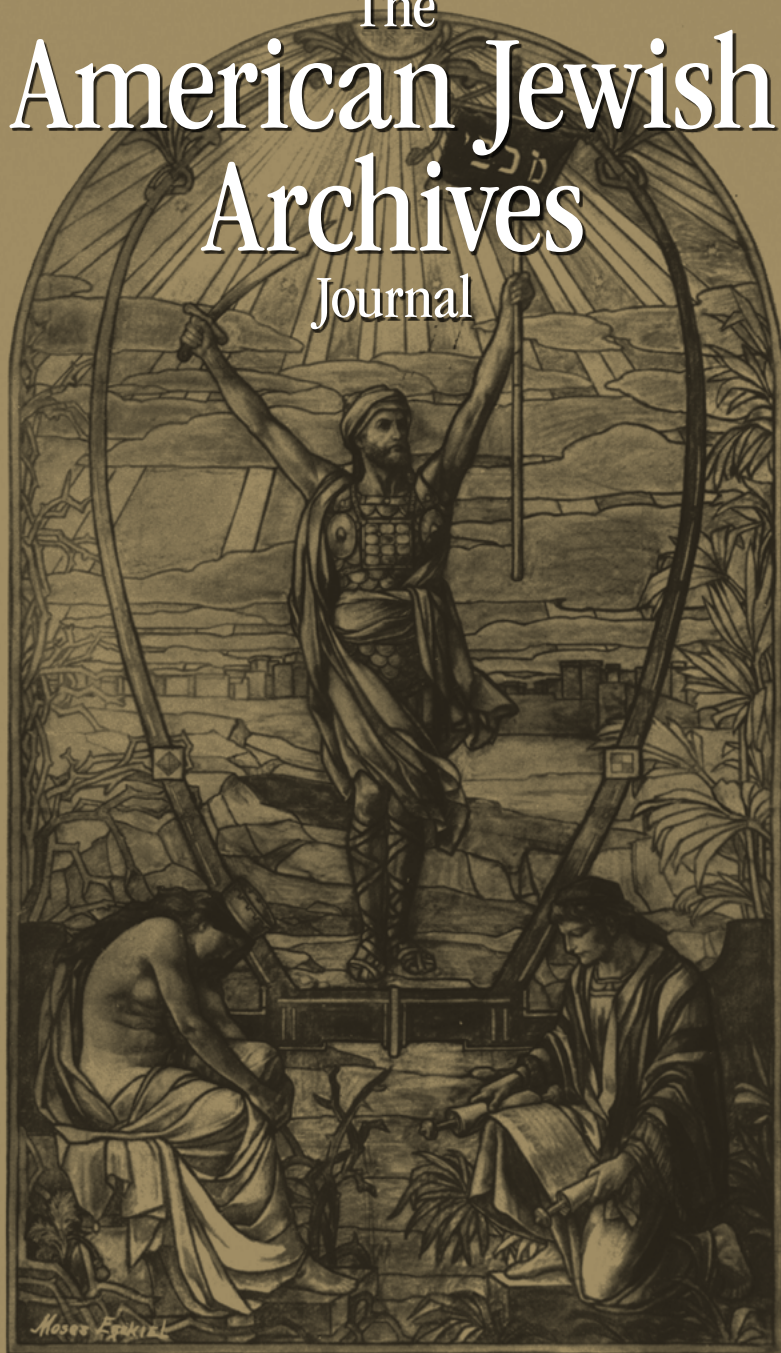


The
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The
American Jewish
Archives
Journal

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

Dana Herman, Ph.D., Editor
Gary P. Zola, Ph.D., Editor Emeritus
Jacob Rader Marcus, Ph.D., Founding Editor (1896–1995)

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On the cover:

Image of Wise memorial window, Moses Jacob Ezekiel, 1909, from former Keneseth Israel synagogue on North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA. Text at the bottom of the window reads: "Erected in memory of Isaac M. Wise. The Wise shall shine as the brightest of the firmament; they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

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TO OUR READERS . . .

Abraham Lincoln aptly noted that “the better part of one’s life consists of his friendships...”¹ Rabbi Dr. Lance J. Sussman has been a friend, colleague, and collaborator for nearly a half century, and that is, by any reckoning, the better part of our lives! Our paths first crossed during our student days in Cincinnati. Drawn together by a deep interest in the history of the Jewish people—especially the American Jewish experience—we found ourselves pursuing similar professional interests. We were acquiring a rabbinical education with a keen focus on the American Jewish past. Above all, we relished the precious opportunity to study with a man known as the “dean of American Jewish historians,” the inimitable Jacob Rader Marcus (z”l).

Marcus introduced me to Lance Sussman, then a student rabbi, in the spring of 1979. Having completed the school’s required course in American Jewish history, I approached “the doctor” to ask if he would be willing to craft an advanced independent readings course over the summer. After agreeing to my request, we began to discuss topics that might be explored, as well as the nature of the written assignment that such a course would require. Dr. Marcus informed me that he expected me to read several predetermined volumes on a given topic broadly construed and required a term paper based on original research. He then recommended that I speak to an upperclassman named Lance J. Sussman who had already studied with Marcus the previous summer. Mr. Sussman’s term project, Dr. Marcus solemnly declared, was “outstanding.” He therefore urged me to review Sussman’s work and use it as a touchstone for my own efforts.

The next day, I found Sussman’s research project at the American Jewish Archives. The work was entitled “Jewish Intellectual Activity and Educational Practice in the United States: 1776–1840.” This so-called term paper immediately provoked a cascade of anxiety and insecurity. Not only was Sussman’s “term paper” lengthy—*two hundred*

1 Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 1:302.

and fifty-five pages!—but it also seemed as if a seasoned scholar had written it! To the best of my knowledge at that time, such a work was the equivalent of a PhD dissertation!

It did not take long, however, to discover that the heart of the person responsible for this impressive research project was every bit as large as his astonishing intellect. Many academics and scholars hold the fruits of their laborious research close to their chests, hesitating to share archival documents or research discoveries with colleagues who may somehow benefit or derive credit from the sweat of their brow. My schoolmate had no such tendencies. Shortly after he passed his doctoral comprehensive examinations, which required many months of dedicated preparation, Lance provided me with copies of the excellent bibliographies he compiled in order to sit for those onerous tests. This unsolicited and thoughtful gesture saved me countless hours of preparation in advance of the comprehensive exams.

Sussman also offered me extremely valuable scholarly counsel regarding the writing of a dissertation, which he began a year or two before me. “If you elect to write a biographical study as I am doing,” the experienced Sussman informed me laconically,

make sure you avoid the error that I have made: I elected to study the life of Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), but I failed to realize when I selected my research topic that Leeser lived a *long* life during which he published copious volumes and composed mountains of correspondence. If you choose to research the life of an important American Jew, make certain you select a significant personality who died young!

This advice made good sense to Zola, and in no time at all, I found my man: Isaac Harby of Charleston, the great intellect of the Reformed Society of Israelites and a fascinating figure who, fortunately for me, died at the age of forty (1788–1828).

In sum, Lance J. Sussman has been for so many of his colleagues what he was for me—the very model of a scholar and a gentleman. The much-overused accolade is nevertheless true when it comes to Sussman: he is a thoroughgoing mensch. To the best of my knowledge, Lance has only one major shortcoming: if he only had red hair!

Sussman's approach to the study of American Jewish history constitutes a marvelous alchemy of rigorous scholarship and rabbinical discernment. Today, most historians of the American Jewish experience received their doctoral training at a secular university, not in the halls of a scholarly seminary. These scholars are comfortably ensconced in the academic world, which sometimes still looks suspiciously at "clergy-scholars" whose objectivity and historical neutrality may be unintentionally suspect. Like every rabbinical student who studied with Marcus, Sussman learned that the rabbinate and the critical study of the past must never become antithetical enterprises. Marcus insisted that the Reform rabbi's leadership capacities were fortified and enhanced through lifelong learning and advanced study:

Every rabbi has 3,000 years of intelligent ancestors. If you do not become increasingly more and more a learned rabbi, you betray the heritage of those who gave you birth. Without learning there is no Judaism. Count that day lost in which you have not opened a Jewish book. If you do not learn, you cannot lead; if you do not study, you are only a hireling.²

On the one hand, Marcus memorably insisted that the study of history demanded scholarly detachment:

One must fanatically detest falsehood; one must search his soul every time he writes a sentence. The fact scrubbed clean is more eternal than perfumed and rouged words. The historian's desk is an altar on which he must sacrifice his most cherished prejudices. One must be dedicated to the truth.³

Rabbi Marcus readily acknowledged that partiality was an inherent human trait. No historian, he wrote, could "jump out of his skin." The "critical method" of study, to use his preferred terminology, must never

2 Jacob Rader Marcus, "The Larger Task," An Address delivered at the Ninetieth Ordination Exercises of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 1974, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

3 Herbert C. Zafren and Abraham J. Peck, *The Writings of Jacob Rader Marcus: A Bibliographic Record* (Cincinnati, OH: American Jewish Archives, 1978), frontispiece.

be sacrificed to personal biases. Yet Marcus willingly conceded that every historian, just like every human being, possessed his or her own perspective on the facts. "I like Jews," Marcus frankly admitted. "I am convinced that they are an unusually gifted lot."⁴

Sussman has consistently emulated his *Doktorvater's* academic methodology. He has produced meticulously researched scholarship and, concomitantly, he is regarded by his congregants and his rabbinical colleagues as a truly learned rabbi. In following this path, Sussman has earned a worthy place among a select group of Marcus disciples. Bertram Wallace Korn (1918–79), Marcus's first doctoral student, made enduring contributions to the field through his impeccably researched works on American Jewry, the Civil War, and the early history of New Orleans. Korn produced these publications while serving as the senior rabbi of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, a pulpit that Sussman would assume in 2001 and lead with distinction for more than two decades.

Another Marcus disciple, Stanley Chyet (1931–2002), produced a valuable biography on colonial Newport's wealthiest Jew, Aaron Lopez (1731–1782). Chyet meticulously reconstructed the life of this complicated Jewish refugee from Portugal who immigrated to Newport in 1752. There he built a successful business and became the wealthiest Jew in his community. Lopez generously funded the community's synagogue even as he marketed thousands of enslaved human beings. He seemed to have forgotten his upbringing in Portugal, where he and his family had suffered bitterly from anti-Jewish oppression. Chyet served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College for decades. He was a researcher at heart, but, like his mentor Marcus, Chyet relished his role as a teacher of rabbis. He also remained actively involved in the rabbinate, composing liturgical poetry and always willing to substitute for rabbinic colleagues who were on vacation, ill, or in need of some rabbinical assistance.

Lance Sussman's professional career, like that of Marcus's other

4 Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, 4 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989–93), 1:14; and Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775–1865*, 3 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1974), 1:5.

rabbinical disciples, constitutes an affirmation of his teacher's unflagging commitment to exemplary research seasoned by an unfeigned admiration for the history of the Jewish people. His seminal volume on Isaac Leeser will remain the authoritative resource on this pioneering American Jewish personality for many generations. So many of his fine articles, like "‘Toward Better Understanding’: The Rise of the Interfaith Movement in America and the Role of Isaac Landman" and "The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism" will be repeatedly cited by future historians.⁵

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that Sussman has also been a true credit to the Reform rabbinate. He has taught thousands of congregants over the decades. He imparted his love for the Jewish people and its past from the pulpit, under the marriage canopy, and even at the funeral bier. These attainments must never be minimized or overlooked.

One of Isaac Mayer Wise's students memorialized a noteworthy incident that occurred during a class that Wise was teaching. Wise suddenly began to feel ill and decided to end the class early. As Wise began to step down from his teaching platform, a well-meaning rabbinical student jumped up from his seat, grabbed his teacher's arm and said, "May I help you down, Doctor?" The famous rabbi shifted his glance and said in a voice loud enough for the rest of the class to hear: "Never help a person down, my boy, a rabbi must *always* help people up!"⁶ This is how Rabbi Dr. Sussman has led in the various communities he served over the past four decades. He has been a learned rabbi who never lost sight of his obligation to help people up.

5 Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Sussman, "‘Toward Better Understanding’: The Rise of the Interfaith Movement in America and the Role of Isaac Landman," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 31, no. 1 (1982): 35–51; and Sussman, "The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 57, nos. 1–2 (2005): 29–52.

6 Stanley R. Brav, *Telling Tales Out of School* (Cincinnati, OH: HUC-JIR Alumni Association, 1965), 68.

This issue of our journal is intended to serve as a tribute to Rabbi Dr. Sussman. It consists of new contributions to the field written by distinguished scholars who have known and admired Sussman for many years. Our readers will enjoy each one of the articles contained herein because they enhance our understanding of the American Jewish experience and also because they were written and assembled to fete and salute our accomplished colleague and friend, Lance J. Sussman.

The sages of yore famously taught: ביום טובתו של חברך שמח עמו, “On the day that something wonderful happens to your friend, rejoice with him” (Qohelet Rabbah 7). All of us who know and admire this special colleague are rejoicing over this fine *Festschrift* written in Lance’s honor. As he reads these words of tribute, we remind him to pay heed to the wise counsel that the prominent lawyer and Jewish communal leader Simon Wolf (1836–1923) proffered when his colleagues and friends feted him with meeds of praise on his eightieth birthday: “I’d rather have a stick of taffy while I’m living,” Wolf rejoined, “than a column of *epitaffy* when I’m dead!” We are confident that our readers will enjoy these new, fascinating scholarly essays written in earnest recognition of our colleague and friend, Lance J. Sussman. There is more than enough historical taffy in this issue of our journal to sweeten every reader’s palate!

Gary P. Zola
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Perils and Prospects: Jewish Integration in New Amsterdam and New York, 1654–1865

HOWARD B. ROCK

Since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the question of integration and assimilation has been a central theme in Jewish history. In Europe, where legal discrimination remained well into the nineteenth and in some places the twentieth centuries, the difficulties encountered by Jews who sought to enter the mainstream of political, economic, and social life resulted in large-scale conversions as well as lasting personal anguish. We need only think of the father of Karl Marx, who converted to pursue a legal career, or the poet Heinrich Heine, whose conversion resulted in lifetime personal anguish, or the religious philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, some of whose children and all of whose grandchildren were or became Christians. In America, especially in New York, which was the center of American Jewish life after the Revolution, these dilemmas were far less present. British mercantile thought and the rise of republicanism created opportunity not found in Europe. Conversion was not necessary for integration into the mainstream of American life.

In order to understand how integration and assimilation play out in any given culture, we must define these terms. As used in this study, the term “integration” refers to the successful entry of a group—in this case, New York Jewry—into the economic, social, and political life of the city. The success with which New York Jews were able to participate in the urban marketplace, join organizations such as the Mechanics or Silversmiths Society, or vote and run for office are indicators of integration. “Assimilation” involves a further step; it is “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common

cultural life.” In other words, the extent to which integration results in the transformation of the group is the extent of assimilation.¹

Assimilation allows for several possibilities. Minority populations may remain distinct communities, in which case they become part of a multicultural society that contains several minority groups each retaining its separate and distinct identity. A population may fully adopt the identity of the host country and cease existing as a distinct group, or it may partially assimilate, retaining a limited ethnic, racial, or religious identity. Finally, a minority population may become part of a melting pot, a process of homogenization in which differing cultures form a new, separate culture. Part of the process of assimilation may be triggered by a common class and/or racial identity that connects different sectors of society.²

American Jewish historians have long discussed the processes of integration and assimilation, analyzing changes between generations as well as the Jewish institutions and neighborhoods that have been at the forefront of American Jewish identity. They describe the process in which American Jews adopted American history as their history and American culture as their culture, testing whether the ties that for generations bound the Jewish community would diminish and whether the group would experience total assimilation or maintain its identity by adjusting to the new world. Would the process of Americanization be one of limited integration with restricted contact outside the community; partial assimilation, which would involve adopting American history and values while maintaining a distinct Jewish identity; or the disappearance of the Jewish community?³

1 Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921, 1961), 735. The definition is Park's.

2 Russel A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 427–471.

3 Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?" in *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Cecile Kuznitz, "At Home in the City: Jewish Urban History between the New and Old Worlds," *American Jewish History* 100 (2016): 221–232. Three significant books that address assimilation in America and Europe are Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in*

Most studies of Jewish assimilation cover the era of mass immigration of Eastern European Jewry that began in the 1880s. They are commonly multigenerational and rely on an abundance of historical documentation, both written and visual. For the period before the Civil War, evidence is largely limited to synagogue minutes and newspapers; it is difficult to quantify changes. Within these limitations, this article seeks to describe the trends in integration and assimilation during the Dutch and British colonial eras, the early national era, and the antebellum era. Focusing on the relationship of the Jewish community to the host community, it describes the efforts of New York's Jewish communities to maintain their presence and ultimately become a significant factor in urban society.

A Synagogue Community: Colonial New Amsterdam and New York

American Jewish history begins in 1654 with the arrival of twenty-three Dutch Jews in New Amsterdam, refugees from Brazil, where they had been colonists until the Portuguese retook their settlement. These Jews, together with two Jewish Dutch merchants already in New Amsterdam, sought to reside in this remote outpost of the Dutch West India Company. They were not welcomed by Dutch merchants or the governor of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant, who asked the directors of the West India Company to expel them as members of a “deceitful race,—such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ.” Amsterdam's leaders saw these Jewish newcomers, known for “customary usury and deceitful trading with Christians,” as unwelcome immigrants. They were a potential fifth column. In early modern Europe, Jews were believed to constitute a separate nation, a reason for ghettoization and restriction beyond the Christian contempt for the fact that they did not recognize Jesus as their savior.⁴

America: Second Generation New York Jews (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) and Stephen J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); and David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁴ Peter Stuyvesant to Amsterdam Chamber of the West India Company, 22 September

On the other hand, the Jews seeking to live in this young colony saw themselves not as foreign immigrants but as Dutch colonists moving from one settlement to another. The Dutch had fought the Spanish for eighty years for the right to live as they chose, and Dutch Jews shared this legacy. In the process, Holland's Jews achieved admittance into the body politic. Their leaders became prosperous, erecting a magnificent synagogue and helping fund the Dutch West India Company. When the Jewish Dutch merchants in New Amsterdam sought the rights of Dutch citizenship, asking that "the Jewish nation be allowed, like other inhabitants, to travel, live and traffic there, and...enjoy liberty on condition of contributing like others," their standing in Amsterdam prompted the company to grant their petition. Noting that members of the Jewish community of Amsterdam had invested "a large amount of capital...in the shares of the Company," it ordered that Jews be permitted to "travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there." Later petitions won the right to stand guard, conduct private religious services, and achieve burgher standing.⁵ Unfortunately, while the patronage of the Amsterdam Jewish community enabled the twenty-three to attain many of the same rights as Jews living in Amsterdam, they could not create a cohesive community amidst the antisemitism and hostility they encountered, and they left the colony within a decade. In such an atmosphere there was no possibility of integration, much less assimilation.

1654; approval of the Burgomasters on 1 March 1655 in Samuel Oppenheim, "The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654–1664: Some New Matters on the Subject," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 18 (1909): 4–5.

5 Peter Stuyvesant to Amsterdam Chamber of the West India Company, 22 September 1654; approval of the Burgomasters on 1 March 1655; Petition of Jacob Barsimon and Asser Levy regarding guard duty, 5 November 1655; Letter from directors of the West India Company, 13 March 1656; Letter from directors of the West India Company, 13 March 1656 in Oppenheim, "Early History," 8, 21, 24–25. West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, 26 April 1655 in Morris Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews of the United States, 1654–1875* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 4–5. For a valuable overview, see Paul Finkelman, "'A Land that Needs People for its Increase': How the Jews Won the Right to Remain in New Netherland," in *New Essays in American Jewish History*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman (Cincinnati: Ktav and the American Jewish Archives, 2010), 19–50.

The colony of New York, which commenced with the peaceful takeover of New Amsterdam in 1664, saw New York City grow into a prosperous port with a heterogeneous population. The British government's mercantilist outlook held that the economic needs of the state were more important than the needs of the church. Consequently, unlike the Dutch, the city's Jews posed no problem for local British leadership. In 1674, Governor Edmund Andros issued an order to "permit all persons of what Religion so ever, quietly to inhabit within ye precincts of your jurisdiction without giving ym any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever, for or by reason of their differing opinion in matters of Religion." Discriminatory regulations against Jewish retailers were allowed to lapse. In 1740, when Parliament bestowed citizenship on all residents who had lived in New York for seven years, their grant did not include the clause "upon the true faith of the Christian" in the oath required of voters and holders of government office. New York became one of the most hospitable places for Jewish inhabitants in the Atlantic world.⁶

The Jewish population of New York City grew slowly. By 1700, there were about twenty families (or one hundred Jews) living in the city, about 2.5 percent of the population; by 1750 there were three hundred Jews in the city of 13,000, or 2.3 percent. Many of the first Jewish residents were Sephardic, from families that originated in Spain, Portugal, or France. They were joined by English Jews and a few Central and Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews seeking economic opportunity.

The community was led by its wealthy Jewish merchants, largely Sephardic in the 1600s but Ashkenazi in the eighteenth century. Colonial New York's Jewish elite integrated into the colony's highest circles, both economically and socially. Colonial partnerships of Jewish and Christian merchants imported and exported goods from Europe and the West Indies. One jointly funded slave ship brought 119 enslaved Africans to the city after a horrific crossing. Wealthy Jewish merchants

6 Simon W. Rosendale, "An Act Allowing Naturalization of Jews in the Colonies," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 1 (1893): 93–98; Leo Hershkowitz, "Some Aspects of the New York Merchant Jewish Community, 1654–1820," *American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly* 66 (1976–1977): 13–18; Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 101.

dressed as finely as their gentile counterparts, a few developing close ties to government officials. Governor Richard Coote, First Earl of Bellomont, said that he “would have been undone” had he not relied on Jewish merchants in 1700, while Governor Robert Hunter turned to merchant Nathan Simpson for funds during Queen Anne’s War. Jacob Franks, the wealthiest Jewish merchant in the mid-eighteenth century, and his wife visited regularly with Governor William Cosby in the 1730s, discussing news of Britain’s wars with France and Spain. The Franks were ardent British patriots, enthusiastic supporters of the growing empire. Like the Dutch refugees, Jewish merchants saw themselves as fellow colonists rather than immigrants. Unlike the Dutch years, there was little resistance, and the city’s prominent Jewish merchants integrated into the community of elite New York. Their British patriotism indicates a significant degree of political and social assimilation.⁷

The world of the Jewish lower ranks was significantly different from that of elite merchants. The lives of the families of these small shopkeepers and craftsmen centered around their synagogue, Shearith Israel, erected in 1730 with the financial help of Jews throughout the Americas. They lived close to the small, inconspicuous sanctuary on Mill Street. Governed in the fashion of western European synagogues by a board of elders, Shearith Israel considered itself the protector of the community. The elders stated in their minutes that they were “faithful Shepherds [who] call into the fold wandring sheep.” Traditional Judaism required strict observance of the Sabbath on Saturdays. Dietary laws (kashrut) stipulated that Jewish communal and family life be separate; Jews could not eat at the homes of non-Jews. Meat had to be slaughtered according

7 James T. Gilchrist, ed., *The Growth of the Seaport Cities, 1790–1825* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1967), 28; Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 469; Howard B. Rock, *Haven of Liberty: New York Jews in the New World, 1654–1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 28–35; David De Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682–1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 461; Michael Ben-Jacob, “Nathan Simson: A Biographical Sketch of a Colonial Jewish Merchant,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 51 (1990): 16–17; Leo Hershkowitz, “Some Aspects,” 13–18; “Anatomy of a Slave Voyage, New York, 1721,” *de Halve Maen* 76 (2003): 45–51.

to Jewish law; the synagogue paid the *shochet* (butcher) and inspected his work and imported beef. While New York's Jewish community interacted within society in the marketplace, they led a separate existence once they left their store or workshop. In this sector of the community there was limited economic integration and little assimilation.⁸

Descriptions of the synagogue by eighteenth century visitors are helpful. Physician Alexander Hamilton (1744) saw a medieval service. During prayers he observed "fifty of the seed of Abraham chanting and singing their doleful hymns around the sanctuary...in robes of white silk." He compared the women's gallery to a hen coop. Visitor Peter Kalm (1747) described a contemporary service with men and women dressed in fashionably English clothing reading prayers. Hamilton saw New York Jewry as living in a world far remote from the modernity of New York, while Kalm saw a service with a congregation that identified as British and was cognizant of contemporary English customs. It is not necessary to choose between the two. New York's colonial Jewish community followed a prayer service that was rooted in medieval life and kept to themselves for the most part, but its leaders, the elders of the synagogue who were members of the merchant elite, lived both in their synagogue community and in eighteenth-century British society. A visitor would see both aspects of the Jewish community in its synagogue and choose which to emphasize.⁹

Intermarriage was rare within the insular synagogue community. One study of colonial Jewish society in Atlantic settlements concluded that 45 percent of Jewish men and 41 percent of Jewish women did not marry, likely because of a paucity of eligible mates in these small communities. It is likely that many young Jewish men and women either refused or did not (or could not) consider marriage to a non-Jew.¹⁰

8 Rock, *Haven*, 45–59, 79–80 (28 March 1758); "The Earliest Extant Minutes of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, 1728–1786," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 21 (1913): 70–72 (13 September 1752), 9 (10 April 1752), and 68–70.

9 Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America: The English Version of 1790*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1964), 1:130; Lee M. Friedman, "Dr. Hamilton Visits Shearith Israel," *American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly* 40 (1950): 183–184.

10 Robert Cohen, "Jewish Demography in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of London,

Opportunities for intermarriage were more common among families of wealthy Jewish merchants who mixed socially with the Christian elite. They were, however, a cause of upheaval. The reaction of the city's most prominent Jewish woman, Abigaill Franks, to her daughter Phila's elopement with Oliver Delancey, the brother of one of the city's political leaders, is instructive. Abigaill, who was knowledgeable about colonial politics and well connected with the city's gentry, took the marriage as an earthquake. She retreated to her summer home on Long Island and refused to leave, "my house has bin my prisson." Neither she nor her husband spoke to their daughter again. Her son David had been a virtuoso Jewish boy, adept at reading the Torah. But when he followed the example of his sister and married Margaret Evans, the daughter of the recorder of Pennsylvania, Abigaill broke off all contact with him.¹¹

The way in which Abigaill Franks responded to the intermarriages of her children reveals the intensity of concern in colonial New York Jewish society with maintaining their small community. The eighteenth century was an era of religious skepticism, an age of reason. Well-educated Jewish elite lived and dressed like their Christian neighbors; their social world extended well beyond the boundaries of the synagogue community. Yet Jacob and Abigaill Franks were also leaders of the synagogue and saw intermarriage as a threat to the survival of their Jewish community. Integration had strict limits. Assimilation into the world of British imperialism and the increasingly secular atmosphere of eighteenth-century ideas was both acceptable and desirable, but no further.¹²

The West Indies and Early America," (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1976), chs. 5–6.

11 Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore Myer, eds., *The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Correspondence: The Letters of the Franks Family* (Waltham: American Jewish Historical Society, 1968), 116–122 (7 June 1743), 129–131 (letter of Jacob Franks), (22 November 1743).

12 Edith Gelles, ed., *The Letters of Abigaill Levy Franks, 1733–1748* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xl. N. Taylor Philips, "The Levy and Seixas Families of Newport and New York," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 4 (1896): 197 comments that David Franks, "being so constantly in the society of Christians, was never particularly faithful in the discharge his religious duties, and such cares rested lightly on him." The same, Philips states, applied to sister Phila.

It is noteworthy that, while the the Franks' other children remained Jewish, all their grandchildren were born or became Christian. If men and women such as Jacob and Abigail Franks could navigate between two worlds, their well-educated progeny, exposed to the attractions of enlightenment society, either could not do so or found no reason to make such an effort. Their education and upbringing opened doors to the wondrous universe of eighteenth-century society. But where were fellow Jews in the coffee houses with whom they might discuss the merits of the Whig Party, the novels of Henry Fielding, the plays of Richard Sheridan or the ideas of Adam Smith? Unless they held strong religious convictions, allegiance to the world of the traditional Jew was less appealing. So they, like the children and grandchildren of Mendelssohn, chose the cosmopolitan world, even if that meant rejecting their Jewish identity, customs, and family. Consequently, social integration was problematic at both the elite and common levels of this small Jewish community. For the craftsman and shopkeeper, there was no entry; for the children of the elite, assimilation beyond the synagogue world could mean the rejection of Jewish identity.

It is important to note that antisemitism was not the major factor limiting the integration of colonial New York Jewry. Open antisemitism was rare, although it is important to note the consequences of the 1737 electoral contest between Cornelis Van Horne and Adolph Phillipse, representing two bitter political factions struggling for control of the assembly. Van Horne lost a close race in which several wealthy Jewish merchants took part. Faction leader William Smith, Sr. denounced these voters as debasing the "honor of Christianity and the preservation of the Constitution," declaring that only if "the Unfortunate Israelites were content to lose their votes, could they escape with their lives." The assembly proceeded to disenfranchise Jews in assembly elections despite British law to the contrary. Antisemitism, while largely quiescent, could emerge at times of stress, particularly in politics. It was always a potentially limiting factor in both social and political integration and assimilation. For the most part, however, the life of colonial New York Jewry, an enclosed community, remained largely free of open bigotry.¹³

13 William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 41–44.

The Promise of Revolution: Assimilation in Republican New York

If politics was of little importance to most of the synagogue community of New York, the coming of the American Revolution ended that isolation. From 1765 to 1776, as crisis after crisis from the Stamp Act to the Boston Tea Party worsened relations between the colonists and parliament, and as Americans responded with boycotts, embargoes, and other forms of protest, every New Yorker had to declare his or her loyalty. The entire city was politicized; there was no way to avoid it.

The moment of truth came in August 1776, when a large British expeditionary force landed on Staten Island. Once it was apparent that Britain would capture the city, each Jewish resident had to decide whether to leave or remain. The community's spiritual leader, Hazan Gershom Seixas, decided to abandon Shearith Israel and flee to Philadelphia. Before he left, Seixas compared George III to Pharaoh, praying that the British would turn away "their fierce wrath from our North America." Most Jewish merchants, shopkeepers and tradesmen followed his example, although a minority remained. Why did so many leave after a hundred years of largely benevolent British rule? From mixing in the marketplace they likely shared with fellow colonists a sense of disappointment, betrayal, and fear toward king and Parliament; economic integration was critical in the decision-making process of the city's Jews.¹⁴

Following British withdrawal from New York in November 1783, Shearith Israel resumed services under New York's new constitution, a charter that granted Jews "full political equality." Shearith Israel welcomed Governor George Clinton's return to the city, asserting that no other congregation had "Manifested a more Zealous Attachment to the Sacred Cause of America." Both the teachings of our "Divine Legislator to Obey our Rulers" and the "dictates of our own reason" would lead its members to discharge "the duties of Good Citizens."

14 During the seven-year war several of New York's Jews served in the patriot military, while merchants provided financial support from Philadelphia. See De Sola Pool, *Portraits*, 349–351; Rock, *Haven*, 71–84.

These are remarkable words for a synagogue that had until then dealt only with internal affairs such as enforcing dietary laws and the discipline of unruly members.¹⁵

The American Revolution signaled the beginning of a transformation of New York's Jewish community. As noted, prior to 1763 it would not have been difficult to compare colonial New York Jewry to that of many European towns and villages, where Jews were seldom part of the political scene. But after a long, difficult struggle, New York's Jewish community held a shared sense of common national destiny with fellow New Yorkers. The American Revolution was their revolution. Republican politics was their politics. This had potentially problematic implications, and a degree of foreboding is present in the first post-Revolutionary decision by Shearith Israel's governing board to deny a request by Benjamin I. Jacobs to marry "a woman not belonging to our society with intent to make her a Proselyt." This seems to reflect a concern that the level of integration that came with the Revolution might become a threat to the community.¹⁶

With the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788 and the election of George Washington as president, Republican ideology permeated the body politic. During the 1790s conservative republicanism, which stressed deference to and admiration for the British form of government, yielded to Jeffersonian ideals of egalitarianism and civil liberties. The city's Jewish population adopted this creed. Nowhere was Jewish republicanism more evident than in the remarkable constitution that Shearith Israel drafted in 1790. The charter included a bill of rights that opened with a ringing statement: "Whereas in free states all power originates and is derived from the people who always retain every right necessary for their well-being individually... Therefore, we the profession [professors] of the divine laws... conceive it our duty to make this declaration of our rights and privileges." The first right entitled "every free person professing the Jewish religion, and who lives according to its

15 David De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in a New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel, 1654–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 250.

16 "From the 2nd Volume of Minute Books of Congn. Shearith Israel in New York," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 21 (1913): 45.

holy precepts” to a seat in the synagogue “as a brother.” The preamble of the by-laws, echoing the Declaration of Independence, stated that the congregation, “in the presence of the Almighty” within a “state happily constituted upon the principles of equal liberty civil and religious,” has the authority and duty to formulate a “compact.” In this spirit, the congregation wrote President Washington that the Jews of New York would “yield to no class of their fellow-citizens...in affection” for the nation’s leader. Washington responded that the affection of America’s Jews was a “treasure beyond the reach of calculation.”¹⁷

While the leaders of Shearith Israel envisioned that the synagogue, with its new republican footing, would remain the center of the Jewish community, it was not to be. As the pervasive republicanism of the early Republic led to the integration of the entire Jewish community into all aspects of metropolitan life, the city itself became the center of New York’s Jewish community. Economically, the American Revolution brought a surge of capitalist enterprise to a nation no longer tied to mercantilist regulation, offering new horizons in which the Jewish community thrived. The city’s wealthiest Jew, importer and exporter Harmon Hendricks, broadened his ties with manufacturers, including Paul Revere. Four Jewish businessmen joined twenty Christian entrepreneurs to form the New York Stock Exchange in 1793. Jewish merchants traded throughout the world, including with China. Simon Nathan was one of the builders of the new Park Theater. Sampson Simpson, son of wealthy merchant Solomon Simpson, studied law under Aaron Burr, something that would have been impossible in many European countries. Six Jewish physicians were listed in the *New York City Directory* or the records of Shearith Israel.¹⁸

Entrepreneurial horizons expanded for Jewish shopkeepers and craftsmen. Jewish artisans joined the city’s social and fraternal organizations. Silversmith Meyer Myers was president of the New York Gold and Silver

17 Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1959), 150–156; Lewis Abraham, “Correspondence between Washington and Jewish Citizens,” *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* (1895): 93–95.

18 Rock, *Haven*, 94–98.

Smith Society, while Joel Hart was a founder of the New York Medical Society. Jews attained notable offices. Hazan Seixas was a trustee of Columbia College. Ephraim Hart was consul to Scotland. Dr. Jacob LaMotta was surgeon of the Third Brigade of the New York State Militia.

The experience of living through a revolution politicized the Jewish community, leading to a level of participation no colonial Jewish citizen could have imagined. Solomon Simpson became the vice president of the controversial Democratic Society, an organization founded to support the French Revolution. Hazan Seixas gave a sermon critical of the Alien and Sedition Acts, putting him in danger of arrest. In the pivotal election of 1800 between the followers of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, Mordechai Myers worked as a ward spokesman involved in the nitty-gritty of getting votes and increasing turnout. Politics was polarized and intense; every vote might determine the legacy of the Revolution. New York's Jews gravitated to the Jeffersonian persuasion.¹⁹

The city's most noted Jewish citizen, Mordecai M. Noah—playwright, newspaper editor, and American Consul at Tunis—exemplified how well Jews had become part of republican life. Both the Mechanics Society, the fraternal home of the city's artisans, and the Tammany Society, a growing political association, invited him to be their patriotic speaker. Describing the sacrifices of soldiers in 1776 and the treasure of “rational liberty,” he declared that, in America, merit was “the only passport to power.” Hailing the gifts of Judaism to Western civilization, Noah asserted that America was “the bright example of universal tolerance of liberty, true religion in good faith,” the only nation where Jews found acceptance.²⁰

19 Gershom Seixas, *A Discourse Delivered in the Synagogue In New-York, On The Ninth of May, 1798* (New York, 1798), 6, 14–15; Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, 4 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 1:95–97, 579; Marcus, *American Jewry*, 309; Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles*, 77; Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews 1775–1865* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), 52–61.

20 Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 1–13, 35–44; Mordecai M. Noah, *Oration Delivered by Appointment Before Tammany Society of Columbian Order... United to Celebrate the 41st Anniversary of American Independence* (New York, 1817); Mordecai M. Noah, *Address Delivered Before the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen* (New York, 1822).

What of the former centerpiece of Jewish identity and society, Shearith Israel? Its efforts to maintain its place within a republican framework were unsuccessful. Attendance at daily minyan and Sabbath services fell sharply; in 1825 a visitor observed that only “three heads of families” were present at a service. The synagogue could not pay its bills and considered hiring a debt collector. Internal strife made things worse as scarce financial resources and personality clashes led to multiple resignations. Finally, most Jews had moved uptown, out of easy walking distance. The refurbishing of the sanctuary in 1817 failed to stem the decline as its leaders, unwilling to abandon their cherished location, chose not to relocate near the residences of most Jews.²¹

Equally important, New York’s Jewish community failed to keep pace with the growth of the metropolis. By 1825, the city’s Jewish population was five hundred, 0.3 percent of the city’s residents. As the community dwindled into a very small minority, only three out of every one thousand New Yorkers, its survival became a serious issue. Could a coherent Jewish community survive an age of religious skepticism? Could it hold together despite the breakdown of its inner-directed synagogue community? Undergoing an unprecedented level of assimilation, the persistence of a self-conscious Jewish community was in doubt.

The rate of intermarriage rose to about 30 percent in this era. This can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, Jews who entered the metropolitan world could now find other Jews at all levels within the new egalitarian society. There were Jewish marital alternatives that were not available to the children of Jacob and Abigail Franks. On the other hand, the open society, as well as the decline of religiosity in general and the synagogue in particular, diminished the importance of Jewish identity. That is likely the primary reason for the failure of the Jewish community to grow at the same rate as the general population. Young men and women born during the Revolutionary era did not possess the same Jewish identity as their parents, who had grown up within a synagogue community. Diminished religious identity in an age of enlightenment lessened the sense of betrayal that conversion had long

21 Marcus, *United States Jewry*, 1:256, 598; Rock, *Haven*, 116–117.

represented. Assimilation out of that community was an alternative for a significant minority.²²

Still, 30 percent is not 80 percent. There were factors that limited total assimilation. Shearith Israel, even in decline, remained a visible symbol of the Jewish community, especially on high holidays when Jews from throughout the widening metropolis attended. Its presence enhanced the legacy of childhood identity. Immigration, although only a trickle in the years of the Napoleonic Wars, replaced some of the Jews who left the community. Also, while there was less stigma attached to marriage between a Christian and a Jew than in the colonial era, parental opposition to intermarriage, ingrained in mothers and fathers who grew up in the eighteenth century, remained a factor, as did Christian opposition to intermarriage.

Mordecai Noah sought to limit assimilation by making America the new Jerusalem. Declaring that Jews would never return to Palestine, he formulated a plan to establish the community of Ararat near Buffalo. Jews would immigrate to this American haven from throughout the world. There they would establish a new Jewish republican community, a state within a state. After a dramatic opening ceremony, the plan went nowhere. Noah sought to combine integration in a republican society with a vibrant Jewish identity. The quick failure of Ararat is a testament to the difficulty of the challenge.²³

The entry of prominent Jews into the venerable Masonic orders of New York is another example of the perils and promises of assimilation and integration in the republican era. The Masonic movement, which emphasized enlightenment ideals of fraternity and progress within a society replete with arcane symbols and rituals and had the potential to be a competing secular religion, was popular among the Jewish elite.

22 Malcolm M. Stern, "Jewish Marriage and Intermarriage in the Federal Period (1776–1840)," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 19 (1967): 142–144.

23 Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 62–65, 138; Mordecai M. Noah, *A Discourse Delivered at the Consecration of the Synagogue K. K. Shearith Israel* (New York, 1818), 19, 27; Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, eds., *The Jews of the United States, 1790–1840: A Documentary History*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 3:894–900; Schappes, *Documentary History*, 157–160.

Over fifty Jews joined. Joel Hart rose to Deputy Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons. Sampson Simpson was a Lieutenant Grand Commander. The Jewish members of this historic society established a Jerusalem chapter. At an event honoring the dead from the *Jersey*, a notorious British prison ship, the chapter's members crafted a Masonic prayer that beseeched the Lord, "excellent thou art the truth" to "Enlighten us...in the true knowledge of Masonry." The Jewish Masons pleaded not to be "among those that know not thy statutes, nor the divine mysteries of the sacred Cabala," and prayed that the "ruler of this Lodge may be endowed with knowledge and wisdom" to explain secret mysteries as Moses did "in his Lodge to Aaron to *Eliezer* and *Ithamar* [the sons of Aaron] and the several elders of Israel." Like Ararat, this was an attempt at limited assimilation, absorbing the wider community's history and values while maintaining Jewish identity and culture. It was perhaps a difficult task within such an established society, and the success of the lodge is unknown.²⁴

Antisemitism in early national New York was present largely in the Federalist Party whom Jews had deserted for the Jeffersonians. As David Hackett Fischer notes, "a wide and fetid stream of anti-Semitism" ran through "Federalist thought." Printer James Rivington, for example, mocked Solomon Simpson as a man of a race that "will easily be known by their physiognomy; they all seem to be...of the tribe of Shylock; they have that leering underlook and malicious grin that seem to say to the honest man—*approach me not.*" At the height of political tension in 1798, Alexander Hamilton, New York's most prominent Federalist, compared his political enemies to "Shylock the Jew." (*The Merchant of Venice* played to large audiences in 1812–1814, a production in which Shylock was portrayed as "diabolic, enraged and vengeful.") As the Federalists declined as a political force, open antisemitism was less common, with one exception: politics. When Noah ran for sheriff in

24 "Miscellaneous Items Relating to Jews in New York," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 27 (1920): 396–400; Gustavus Hart, "A Biographical Account of Ephraim Hart and his Son, Dr. Joel Hart, of New York," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 4 (1896): 215–219; Rock, *Haven*, 98–100; Edmund R. Sadowski, "A Jewish Masonic Prayer," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 48 (1958–1959): 134–135.

1821, an important position, newspapers declared that his opponent was “an old member of the church,” and that a recent outbreak of yellow fever was God’s “judgment” for prominent citizens “publicly abetting the election of an infidel in preference to a Christian.” It is telling that Noah lost the election, while the other candidates on the Democratic ticket won handily. Despite their political allegiance, enough voters in New York harbored antisemitic fears to prevent Noah’s election. While such incidents were uncommon and remained a lingering presence, they did not prevent the widespread Jewish integration and assimilation into New York society that characterized the republican era.²⁵

Multicultural Success: The German Immigration

Given the years of virtually no population growth, the lack of a Jewish neighborhood and a vibrant synagogue, and the welcoming spirit of republicanism, we will never know whether New York’s small Jewish community would have avoided total assimilation, although it is difficult to imagine a community of only 0.33 percent maintaining its identity within a large American metropolis. This dilemma, however, remains theoretical because a wave of immigration beginning in the 1830s, largely from Germany and Ireland, changed the nature of New York City’s Jewish community forever. By 1855 half the city’s residents were immigrants, as the population of the city increased from 200,018 in 1832 to 814,000 in 1860. Among the immigrants arriving in America were 150,000 Jews from Germany and Central Europe and some from Poland and Eastern Europe. Many remained in the city as New York’s Jewish population rose from 500 in 1825 (0.3 percent) to 16,000 in 1850 (3.1 percent) and near 40,000 (5 percent) a decade later.²⁶

25 David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 164; Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 45–46; Frederic Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 137; Morris J. Schappes, “Anti-Semitism and Reaction, 1795–1800,” *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 38 (1948–1949): 119. Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles*, 73–79; Marcus, *United States Jewry*, 1:495, 525, 539, 556.

26 Grinstein, *Rise*, 469.

It is difficult to exaggerate the change that took place over the next thirty years. In 1825 there was but a single synagogue in New York. By 1860 there were twenty-seven. While many were small, converted buildings, it was the ornate synagogues in fashionable neighborhoods that marked the new Jewish place in antebellum New York. In 1850, Anshe Chesed, a large German congregation, constructed a neo-Gothic sanctuary seating over 1200 with enclosed pews, stucco walls, stained glass windows, and a controversial rendering of the Ten Commandments in glass. Shearith Israel moved to West 19th Street and Fifth Avenue, constructing a seventeenth-century Baroque-style synagogue with an octagonal dome supported by Corinthian columns. At the time of its consecration, it was the tallest building above Fourteenth Street. In 1862, Temple Emanu-El erected a towering Moorish revival structure on Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street at a staggering cost of \$650,000. These lavish synagogues were in the fashionable neighborhoods on Union Square and northward on Fifth Avenue. Each synagogue had its own identity, usually based on ethnicity, with many German but also Dutch and English speaking houses of worship along with a reform synagogue.²⁷

The erection of the ornate synagogues reveals the rapid advancement of the city's Jewish community in the antebellum era. The city's Jews forswore the modesty of an inconspicuous sanctuary, announcing their presence by building synagogues more costly than most of the city's churches. If integration in the early national era meant that New York society was open to Jews as individuals joining the Mechanics Society, the Masons, Tammany Hall, and the New York Stock Exchange, antebellum integration provided a different definition, that of a highly visible and separate community. The elegant sanctuaries were symbols of a Jewish society led by men of immense wealth, well beyond that of the early republic. The three proprietors of the clothing manufacturer

27 Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), 33–37, 48–50, 72–76; De Sola Pool, *Old Faith*, 53–57; Myer Stern, *The Rise and Progress of Reform Judaism: Temple Emanu-El of New York* (New York, 1895), 13–38; *The Asmonean*, 7 April 1854; 27 May 1857; 9 April 1858; 24 May 1850; 21 April 1851.

Laisch, Stubblefield & Barnett, for example, possessed a firm that employed 1500 workers.²⁸

While Gotham's elite Jewry still joined Tammany and other notable societies, they also founded distinctly Jewish societies, where prominent Jewish clergy and men of professional and mercantile standing could receive recognition. The elegant annual dinners of the two largest Jewish philanthropic organizations, the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the German Hebrew Benevolent Society, signified this new communal integration. They were forums for the city's prominent Jews to celebrate their charitable concern along with their standing. The presence of guests such as the mayor and the lieutenant governor signified the Jewish community's civic and political importance. It was important for the Jewish community to ensure that the new, distinctively Jewish pattern of integration allowed only limited assimilation. The city's Jewry underwent a transformation in which they incorporated American values such as patriotism, free enterprise, public schools, and equality, while building and reinforcing a strong religious/ethnic identity with religious and benevolent societies and common neighborhoods.

The toasts and speeches at the gathering of the benevolent societies refuted any accusation of dual loyalty, announcing that this generation of New York Jewry was no less patriotic than the Irish, the English, or any other minority. Declaring that he had never seen true religious equality before he came to America, Rabbi Morris Raphall, the county's most prestigious rabbi, lauded America as "the only Christian nation not stained by spoliation, cruelty or any wrong of any kind committed against the Jew." He urged the city's Jewish merchants in "this land of liberty" to generously provide charity for immigrants fleeing the "stringent laws against the Hebrew." Spokesmen for the German Hebrew Benevolent Society described both the "distress and suffering" of Jewish immigrants and the grandeur of America, where "nobility was not a social class," and where the "noble and liberal constitution," accompanied by "free schools" held sway. These patriotic words asserted that the city's

28 *The New York City Directory, 1856–57* (New York, 1857), available on ancestry.com; Rock, *Haven*, 157. For an overall view of the economic and housing conditions of the Jewish community see Rock, *Haven*, 154–157.

Jews, while proudly displaying their Jewish distinctiveness, had at the same time assimilated and developed a strong American identity. The two were in harmony. Their traumatic pasts only made American Jews more attached to their community and their country.²⁹

The most notable Jewish philanthropic achievement of this antebellum era was the establishment of Jews Hospital in 1855. Built of brick and accommodating up to 150 patients, it rose four stories with wings on each side and a garden courtyard in the center. An institution for Jewish patients who sought kosher food and freedom from Christian missionaries, it was another visible symbol of the Jewish presence in New York. At the consecration ceremony, Rabbi Raphall portrayed New York City as a community in which Jews work “in fellowship to Catholic and Protestant, because we feel that we are the children of one father in service of one God who has created us.” Raphall’s words describe the level of integration and assimilation that the members and founders of Jews Hospital, the benevolent societies, and ornate synagogues felt as they sought full equality within a separate identity as a community of fellow citizens.³⁰

Jewish fraternal societies were popular among the Jewish working and middle classes, now largely immigrant, who did not affiliate with synagogues (likely three-fourths of the population). B’nai B’rith, organized in 1843, combined the traditions of Judaism and Freemasonry, replacing the synagogue with a “lodge room.” Echoing the patriotic spirit of the leaders of the benevolent societies, its officers, besides toasting their own lodges, praised “the glorious West and the Impulsive South,” and “the United States,” their “adopted country,” the “Palestine of the modern Hebrews.” The minutes of the lodges reveal the deep concern with proper English needed for ethical integration and leadership and the degree to which each member must see himself as a “priest in the service of the order of the promotion of intelligence, morality and purity of character.” B’nai B’rith proudly established its own library and held debates on such questions as “Religious education,” “Ideas on a Universal

29 *The Asmonean*, 1, 15 November 1850, 5 December 1851, 19, 26 November 1852.

30 The hospital, originally intended to serve only Jewish clientele, took in all patients during the Civil War, a sign of confident integration. *New York Times*, 9, 18 May 1855; Rock, *Haven*, 167–173.

Religion,” “a solution to the slavery question,” and “The Condition of Political Parties in America.”³¹

Along with B’nai B’rith, literary societies hosted prominent speakers such as Isaac Mayer Wise. Spokesman Moses Lyon declared that Jews were “peers of any wise men of the Gentile,” and that “kings of Intellect” had always marked the Jewish people. In the “mighty Republic of WASHINGTON,” Israelites witnessed the “victory of reason, love and knowledge over the cantering remains of prejudice, hatred and superstition.” Like the benevolent societies, these organizations reflected distinct Jewish communal identity within an atmosphere of social and patriotic integration, now combined with the ideals of the German Enlightenment.³²

While fraternal societies served hundreds of Jews who did not belong to a synagogue, most of the Jewish population had no formal ties to a Jewish organization. What was the level of their integration into antebellum New York City? Those who worked for Gentile proprietors often had to work on Saturday. Moreover, if the complaints of the city’s religious leaders are accurate, many neglected Jewish dietary laws. Even so, Jewish cohesion during the antebellum era was strong. The rise of Jewish neighborhoods was central to the assimilation and integration of Jews who either belonged to the working class or were small proprietors.

In the early national era, when only one out of every three thousand residents were Jewish, it was impossible for Jews to form a unique residential area. By 1860, when five out of every hundred residents were Jewish, New York was a city of immigrants and immigrant wards. The new Jewish immigrant population in antebellum New York, which outnumbered the non-German Jewish population, lived within German-speaking neighborhoods in Kleindeutschland, today’s Lower East Side. They lived next to other Jewish and non-Jewish German immigrants in crowded housing. Maintaining identity was no longer an issue; assimilation for first-generation immigrants had little appeal. Their comfort was

31 *Asmonean*, 11, 14 June 1851; 9 December 1852; Grinstein, *Rise*, 197–205; Julius Bien, “History of the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith,” *Menorah* (1886): 123–125.

32 *Asmonean*, 19 January 1854, 3 February 1854; 3 and 23 February 1855; 2 March 1855; 20 April 1855; 1 June 1855; 26 May 1856.

in living and mixing with fellow Jews and Germans as they had in the old country. To the extent that they lived in the wider urban environment, they were in harmony with the communal integration established and celebrated by the city's Jewish religious and communal leaders. They may not have shared the same degree of patriotism or social and status concerns, but their participation in public schools and politics moved them in that direction.³³

Schooling was a vital issue for the families of all levels of the city's Jewish population, critical for both integration and assimilation. Responding to the massive influx of German and Irish immigrants, government and civic leaders sought to teach immigrant children American values and provide the skills needed to be productive members of society. The New York Public School Society, founded in 1805 and funded by the state and by private donations, established branches throughout the city. In 1853 it became a municipal responsibility under a board of education.³⁴

Eight synagogues, concerned that public education would lessen Jewish identity, sought to counter this movement by establishing their own schools. B'nai Jeshurun opened its own building in 1854 with one floor for the primary school and older boys and another for young ladies and advanced classes. At its dedication, Rabbi Raphall proclaimed that, with proper education, a Jew might someday "occupy the presidential chair of the United States." This venture and other attempts to form Jewish schools failed quickly. Both the wealthy and the working classes chose not to send their children. Unlike the parents of many Irish Catholic immigrants, Jewish parents considered public schools as the best place for their children.³⁵

33 Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 39–63; Stanley Nadel, "Jewish Race and German Soul in Nineteenth Century America," *American Jewish History* 77 (1987): 6–26.

34 Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), chs. 1–5; Carl Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Rock, *Haven*, 191–195.

35 *Asmonean*, 2 December 1852, 7 January 1853, 6, 13 January 1854, 31 March 1855.

Jewish parents were cognizant that one of the goals of public schools was to Americanize children. That was their goal as well, to the extent that they wished to provide their children the tools necessary to succeed in their new land. Consequently, they were strong supporters of public education. But they also demanded that these schools allow their children to retain their Jewish identity and fought efforts to infuse its curriculum with the Protestantism of the Public School Society. They complained to the trustees of the Fourth Ward, where many lived, that several textbooks were either anti-Jewish or promoted Christianity. A popular speller, for example, declared that a Jew would not “give a shekel to a starving Shepherd.” The society rejected the complaint on the grounds that “Jews have not...cannot have the same privileges as those who embrace the Christian religion.” As Jews grew in number, these complaints had effect; in the 1850s the Board of Education moved toward “tolerance of local option.” If the Bible was read, no commentary was permitted. This was acceptable to Jewish parents. Their continuing effort to make the schools compatible with the concerns of Jewish parents reveals the antebellum sense of communal integration.³⁶

Politics was another arena in which antebellum New York Jewry achieved successful integration with limited assimilation. Given the strong increase in numbers, Jews became an important voting bloc tied to the Democratic Party. In alliance with Tammany Hall, the center of Democratic politics, Jews attained many offices, including, in 1850, the election of the first Jew to the House of Representatives, Emmanuel Hart, who worked his way up from local ward offices to national representative.

The Democratic Party in the 1850s was both pro-immigrant and pro-South. While it might be thought that Passover, a holiday that celebrated liberation from slavery and was central to the lives of the city’s Jewish community, might make the community sympathetic to the plight of the four million black slaves in the South, this was not the case. New York’s Jews, many of whom worked in textile trades that were dependent on the South, refused to compare their ancestors to American slaves.

36 *New York Times*, 28 December 1853.

In fact, they did quite the opposite. Leading Jews such as Noah, the editor of the *New York Evening Star*, published racist articles attempting to prove that Blacks were a dangerous race. Robert Lyon, editor of the weekly *Asmonean*, also a staunch Democrat, strongly supported the fugitive slave law while excoriating abolitionists. Raphall, the city's leading rabbi, wrote a widely distributed pamphlet arguing that slavery was condoned by the Bible, so it was wrong to criticize the South for their practice. Perhaps the most telling comment was that of Jewish intellectual Sigismund Waterman, who argued that Jews owed their renewed sense of "manhood" and comfortable position to America; thus, they must "stand by the Constitution now and forever." The Republican Party threatened to destroy American Jews' successful integration into American life and society, a priceless achievement.³⁷

Race was likely another factor alienating Jews from the Republican Party. Rabbi Raphall in his talk stated that "much has been said respecting the inferiority of his [the Black man's] intellectual powers, and that no man of his race had ever inscribed his name on the Pantheon of human excellence, either mental or moral." The strong racism among non-Blacks in American society of the North is well documented. Living within this highly prejudicial world, many Jews would come to share this view, and it became a factor in Jewish assimilation with the White population.³⁸

It is therefore not surprising that Jews, along with the rest of the city's German population, voted heavily against Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party, a political movement that they feared would destroy the Constitution and their cherished security and standing. Even in

37 This is covered in detail in Rock, *Haven*, ch. 11 and Howard B. Rock, "Upheaval, Innovation and Transformation: New York City Jews and the Civil War," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 64 nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–26, reprinted in Jeffrey Edelstein, ed., *Passages Through the Fire: Jews and the Civil War* (American Jewish Historical Society, Yeshiva University Museum, 2013), 90–135.

38 Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Howard B. Rock, "Noah's Curse: On the Eve of the Civil War, a Rabbi Declares Black Slavery Biblical," *TheTorah.com* (2022).

1864, when it was clear that the Union would prevail, New York Jewry voted more than two to one against Lincoln. The strongest dissenters to this allegiance were the leaders and followers of the Reform movement. Many of them became Republicans, and the rabbi of Temple Emanuel, Samuel Adler, was a devoted supporter of Lincoln. Only after the assassination of Lincoln did the political allegiance of New York's Jewish community shift away from the Democratic Party.³⁹

It was, of course, not just in politics that the Reform and Orthodox found themselves on opposing sides. They held fundamentally opposite views of the future of Judaism in New York and beyond, and they waged a heated contest for the allegiance of the city's Jews. The question of integration and assimilation was central to the contest. If antebellum integration was noted for a strong Jewish identity as an ethnic/religious group, the growth of Temple Emanuel introduced an important challenge to that identity. The growth of the city's first Reform synagogue was extraordinary. In its first twenty years, the congregation moved from a rented room in 1840, to a Baptist church transformed into a Gothic sanctuary, to a towering Moorish revival structure on Fifth Avenue. It became the religious home of many of the city's most prominent Jewish merchants. Following their German Reform forebears, Emanuel eliminated many of the rituals of the Orthodox synagogues, wrote its own prayer book, and demanded strict decorum. Tallit and yarmulkes were first optional and then prohibited. Unlike the Orthodox majority of New York Jewry, its members encouraged movements such as prison reform, publicly opposed slavery, and supported the Republican Party.⁴⁰

Leaders of the Orthodox synagogues castigated both Emanuel and the Reform movement as the first step onto an inexorable path from integration to total assimilation. Reform was nothing but another form of Protestantism. If it succeeded, it would destroy Judaism. As "Lara"

39 Election results for 1864 can be found in the *New York Times* (9 November 1864). See also the analysis in *New York Times* (20 November 1864); Lawrence M. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, IN: Free Press, 1956), 42, 49–50.

40 Grinstein, *Rise*, 353–371; Stern, *Rise and Progress*, 13–24, 30–31, 38–40; Benny Kraut, *From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979), 5; Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture*, 48–50, 72–76.

wrote in the weekly *Jewish Messenger*, reformers adopted practices such as mixed seating to make them superior to the “mass of Jews.” It said to Christian neighbors, “do not despise me as a Jew, I am not one of them. I am a reformed Jew, I wish to come as near to you as I can. I will, therefore, eat with you.... I will marry your daughter” and attend “a church in imitation of your church and a service as near as I can like yours.” Integration of this sort, the Orthodox declared, would lead to total assimilation, the end of Judaism.⁴¹

For the members of Emanu-El, the transformation of Judaism was the final step toward full integration into American society, integration that retained a religious identity suitable to a modern age. If the Reform service reflected in part the formality and decorum of services in Grace Church, it did not mean that the city’s most prominent families were leaving the faith. Rather, the conduct of Emanu-El was an unmistakable statement that they were part of mainstream culture in Gotham. They had risen to the heights of New York society, building a sanctuary with the grandeur and decorum equal to its Christian counterparts while maintaining Jewish identity. Rather than imitating Christianity they were finding a path for Judaism that befit the nineteenth century.

The members of Emanu-El saw themselves as being at the forefront of antebellum integration and assimilation. They integrated by fully entering all aspects of American life—economic, social, and cultural. They assimilated by making American history and American culture their own. They believed that their Jewish identity, which involved adopting modern ways of religious expression, would avoid total assimilation and allow Jews to successfully navigate the perils and promises of nineteenth-century American society.

The rate of intermarriage is unknown for this era. Congregations wrestled with controversies such as whether a man who held a seat in the synagogue and intermarried could retain his standing as an elector. Could his children be buried in the synagogue’s cemetery? Given the hostility to proselytes, should wives be permitted to convert to Judaism?

41 *The Jewish Messenger*, 5 and 19 June 1857, 6 November 1857; 10 and 24 September 1858; 11 November 1859; 11, 18 and 25 May, 20 July 1860; 20 October 1863; *Asmonean*, 22 December 1855; 4 and 11 January 1856; Rock, *Haven*, 220–225.

Historian Hyman Grinstein finds that men who intermarried tended to retain their ties to Judaism while women did not. Male Jews were more prone to intermarry than females. That there was no major outcry over this critical issue suggests that it was not considered a major threat at this moment.⁴²

What role did antisemitism play in antebellum integration? Jews were now a highly visible presence in New York. Areas such as Chatham Street were known for their Jewish shops and bearded proprietors. Jews had become a significant political bloc. With this greater visibility came more open antisemitism. James Gordon Bennett, Sr., the owner of the *New York Herald*, repeatedly pilloried Mordecai Noah. Jews were described as petty merchants who would do anything to earn a dollar. Even such prominent figures as Walt Whitman and Herman Melville made anti-semitic slurs. During the stress of the Civil War, it reached dangerous levels as Jews, “hook-nosed wretches who speculate on disasters,” were depicted as putting their greed above their loyalty.⁴³

It is unsurprising that resistance based on centuries of prejudice would emerge as Jews became a consequential minority. Even so, Jews remained visible and continued to find standing in the economic and social life of the nation’s foremost city. As in the early national era, anti-semitism likely prevented greater intermarriage. It was, however, unable to stem the self-conscious rise of the Jewish community. Overall, the title of Hyman Grinstein’s classic book, *The Rise of the Jewish Community, 1654–1860*, remains valid: by 1860 New York’s Jews had created a vibrant self-aware community.

Assimilation Beyond New York

How does the Americanization experience of the Jews of New York City compare with other Jewish communities during this period? During

42 Grinstein, *Rise*, 372–390; Rock, *Haven*, 190.

43 Jaher, *Scapegoat*, 140–150, 170, 186, 222, 237–238; Arnon Gutfeld, “Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth Century United States,” *American Jewish History* 89 (2001): 355–373; Gary J. Bunker and John J. Appel, “Shoddy Anti-Semitism in the Civil War,” in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 314; Rock, *Haven*, 198–202, 245–248.

the colonial era, Shearith Israel was nearly the only community with a synagogue. Other small communities built sanctuaries only just prior to the Revolution, using Shearith Israel as a role model. Synagogues that appeared in Newport and Philadelphia were led by congregants that had been in and were thoroughly familiar with Shearith Israel. North American Jews were closely connected with each other in trading and marriage networks. Consequently, there were very few differences in the structure of the different Jewish communities.

This common experience continued during the American Revolution as New York's leadership moved to Philadelphia. Jews in the South, although not as closely tied to New York, displayed similar allegiances, and gave similar support with military service and financial assistance. Because New York was the only state without civic disabilities that limited the franchise and right to hold office to Protestants, the quest for political equality that followed the Revolution was led by Jewish communities in Charleston, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. But New York was again the role model. Similarly, the opportunities for social and economic integration afforded by republicanism in New York in the era of the new republic could be seen in Philadelphia, Savannah, and Charleston. Political integration came more slowly, but it did follow.

The issues that troubled the Jewish community of New York, especially antisemitism, intermarriage, and ritual observance also troubled Jews in Philadelphia, Charleston, and Newport. Each situation had to be dealt with by its own synagogue in its own manner, as there was no American Jewish authority and there were few learned Jewish scholars. Consequently, there were variations in Jewish practice. Perhaps the most notable was the difference in southern communities. Savannah's synagogue dedication included the playing of an organ and Masonic ritual, while Charleston built its synagogue in 1792 like "a typical Georgian church." It even included a spire. The synagogues in Charleston and Savannah were the first to introduce Reform rituals, a generation before New York. The presence of slavery in the South after it disappeared in the North would become a divide. This likely led Charleston's synagogue to limit the republicanization of congregational governance. Despite local differences, Jews in all these Jewish communities integrated into

the overall community far more easily than any in Europe.⁴⁴

Integration after the wave of German immigration enlarged the Jewish population in other American cities and similar patterns followed there, too. Benevolent societies and ornate synagogues blossomed, and B'nai B'rith became an outlet for those who did not belong to synagogues. Prominent Jews continued to be welcomed into various political and professional societies; interfaith commercial bonds grew at the same time as Jews became more visible. As in New York, antisemitism remained a problem, but it did not prevent Jewish advancement, while the increased Jewish population and residential environment established a distinct, identifiable community whose continuation and growth were no longer in doubt. Whatever the differences, what is striking is the common successes of upward mobility in American society, the similar structure and concerns of Jewish society, and the common quest to maintain Jewish identity in the process.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In the two centuries between the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1654 and the end of the Civil War, New York's Jewish community underwent three stages of integration and assimilation, each of which remains alive in the twenty-first century. During the British colonial era, both integration and assimilation were limited, as the small Jewish community of twenty to thirty families lived in an insular community centered on their synagogue. Cognizant of the persecution, restrictions, and violence that faced their grandparents and great-grandparents, most of New York's Jews integrated into the marketplace but largely kept to themselves otherwise. They did not adopt British history and culture as their own. The Jewish colonial elite, while they remained leaders of the synagogue

44 Faber, *Time*, ch. 4; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 31–41; Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 41–53; Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia: From Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), chs. 5–6.

45 Faber, *Time*, chs. 5–6; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 42–61; Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 54–67; Wolf and Whiteman, *History*, chs. 7–14.

community, did integrate into the social and political circles of colonial gentry. Comfortable with the culture of eighteenth-century Britain, they assimilated to a limited extent, taking on an identity as patriotic British men of consequence while retaining their traditional Jewish way of life at home. They may have been capable of this duality, but some of their children were not, and they intermarried and abandoned the Jewish community.

The second era, emerging rather suddenly in the 1760s, triggered a remarkable change in integration and assimilation. During the coming of the Revolution, the entire Jewish community was politicized and ultimately adopted American republican ideology. The Jewish community moved from a synagogue-centered society to embrace the open world of republican New York. They entered nearly every aspect of urban society and took on the revolutionary spirit as their own. While it opened many doors, republican thought and promise also offered a degree of assimilation that threatened the cohesion of Jewish communal life. The city's Jewry barely held together as a coherent and identifiable community.

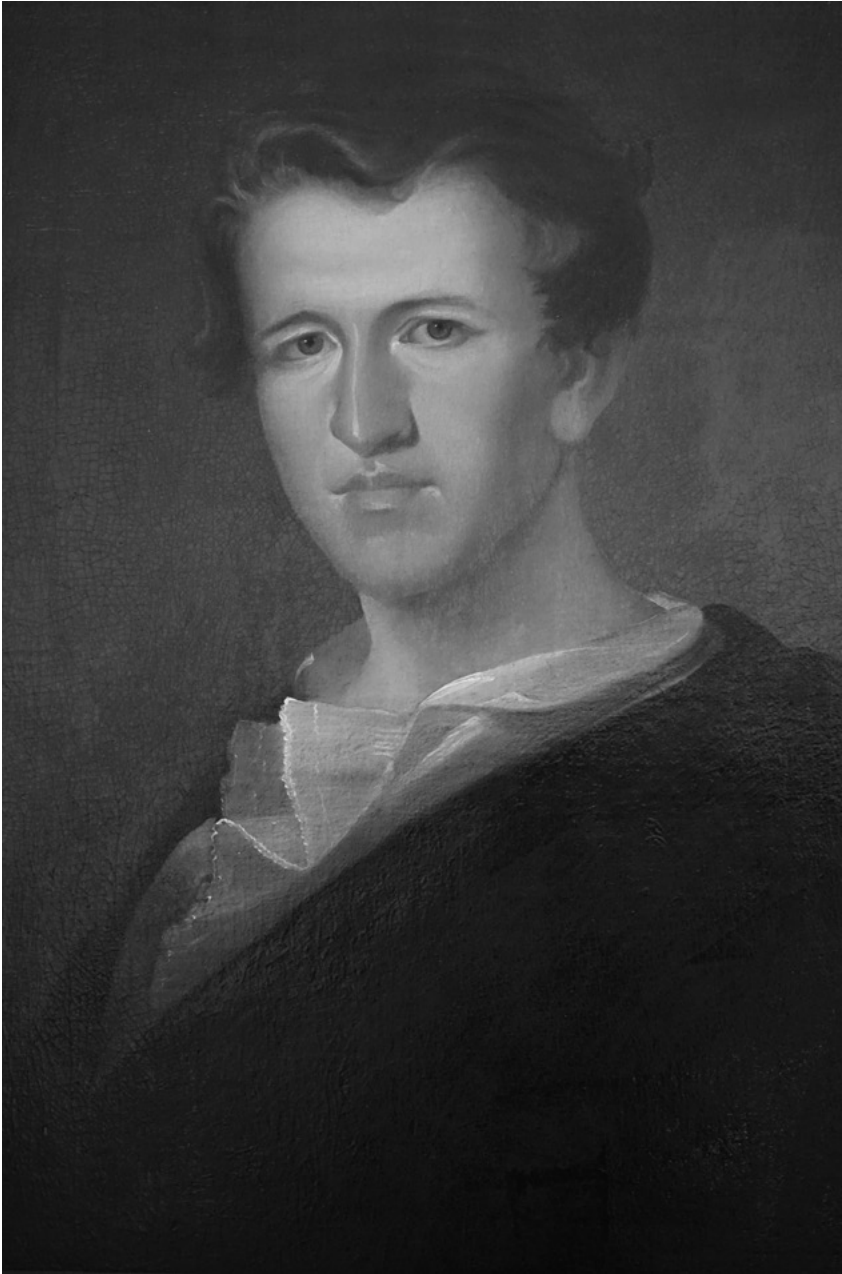
During the third distinct period, the antebellum years, the city's Jewish population grew from a fraction of a percent to over 5 percent and achieved a distinct identity based on neighborhoods, language, increased wealth, and prominence. It became, in today's language, one community in a multicultural setting. Leading Jews of this era constructed many synagogues, including several remarkably ornate sanctuaries, and led the development of a proud public consciousness. Integration into the life of the city remained strong, as did assimilation. New York's Jews took on the same sense of growing patriotism that other immigrants did, making American history their own history and American politics their own politics. Yet, while they assimilated as Americans, they also fashioned a unique identity as American Jews, distinctly visible in all aspects of the city's economic, political, and cultural life.

If we look at New York today, we see the legacy of the colonial city's limited integration and assimilation in several Hasidic sects. While Jews in these communities participate in the marketplace, they otherwise keep to themselves, choosing not to mix with the rest of the population. The spirit of egalitarian republicanism is found among liberal Jews, who share in the progressive outlook of American urban society. The choice

of total assimilation remains a significant option within this community, with up to 70 percent of the non-Orthodox intermarrying. Yet, although challenged and torn by the crosscurrents of modern America and the nature of allegiance to Israel, Jewish identity remains supported by like-minded and longstanding institutions. Multiculturalism, the third form of assimilation, is readily apparent within the modern Orthodox community. Jews in these communities have taken on an American identity while forming a highly distinct subculture whose bedrock is religious faith, American patriotism, and unconditional support of Israel. The legacy of the Jewry of early American Gotham remains visible among the 1.3 million Jews living in contemporary New York.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ For an important survey and analysis of modern American Jewry that includes insight into integration and assimilation today, see Noah Feldman, *To Be a Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel and the Jewish People* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024).



Portrait of David S. Kaufman by Thomas Jefferson Wright.

(Courtesy Sam Houston Memorial Museum and Republic of Texas Presidential Library, Huntsville, TX.)

David Spangler Kaufman: Was the First U.S. Representative Elected from Texas Jewish?

David Spangler Kaufman: Was the First U.S. Representative Elected from Texas Jewish?

PAUL FINKELMAN AND CANDACE JACKSON GRAY*

This article explores the claims of many historians and scholars that David S. Kaufman, one of the first two people elected to Congress from Texas following its admission in the Union in 1845, was Jewish. Kaufman served in the House of Representatives from March 1846 until his death on 31 January 1851. Other scholars are either uncertain of his Judaism or deny it but nevertheless assert, as historian Bryan Edward Stone does, that Kaufman “was of Jewish descent.” Similarly, in an essay on Jews in Texas politics, Rabbi Steve Gutow and Laurie Baker James assert that “David Kaufman, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives when Texas gained statehood in 1846 [*sic*], was of Jewish descent.”¹

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1 Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier: Jews without Judaism,” in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman (Waltham, MA and Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, in association

As we demonstrate in this article, there is no evidence that Kaufman was either Jewish or had any Jewish ancestry. We review the many assertions that Kaufman was Jewish or had Jewish ancestry, explore the lack of any evidence that during his lifetime anyone claimed he was Jewish, examine Kaufman's religion and that of his family, demonstrate that many of his public speeches were overtly Christian, and try to make sense of why for more than a century and a quarter scholars and academic sources have claimed and continue to claim that he was either Jewish or had Jewish ancestry. We begin with the claims of his ancestry and faith. This is in part a microhistory of one individual and an exploration of how a long-standing historical myth was created.² Finally, we hope this article will serve as a caution to scholars of American Jewish history, who have often been so anxious to "discover" important Jews that they ignore the evidence while making arguments that are not logical.

Our article honors Lance Sussman, Paul Finkelman's longtime friend, colleague, coauthor, and sometimes rabbi, in three ways.³ First, we hope

with the Texas Jewish Historical Society, 2007), 22. Steve Gutow and Laurie Baker James, "Most Politics is Local," in Weiner and Roseman, 212–213.

2 "Natalie Zemon Davis: Three Brilliant Examples of Her Microhistory Writing," *Conversation*, 2 November 2023, <https://theconversation.com/natalie-zemon-davis-three-brilliant-examples-of-her-microhistory-writing-216785> notes that "microhistory is a method and approach to historical writing that deploys close analysis of an incident, a life or a specific location as a way into writing about wider society." Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History* 88 (June 2001): 129–144 applies this in part to US history. See also, "What is Microhistory?," MicroWorlds Lab, Duke University, <https://sites.duke.edu/microworldslab/what-is-micro-history/> (accessed 8 July 2024), which notes that "traditionally biography is one way to understand the individual in her or his historical world. Microhistory allows other ways to foreground one small moment or aspect of an individual's life." It goes on to say that "in addition to zooming in on an individual, a community or a unique event, a historian might use other microhistorical practices to illuminate the past." We strive to do both of these things in this article: to understand who David S. Kaufman was and also why so many scholars and historians have gotten his history wrong.

3 As coauthors, they produced, among other publications, Paul Finkelman and Lance J. Sussman, "The American Revolution and the Emergence of Jewish Legal and Political Equality in the New Nation," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 75 (2023): 1–47 and Lance J. Sussman and Paul Finkelman, "Contextualizing Rabbi Davidow's Memoir: A Historical

to make a modest correction to the scholarly and public understanding of antebellum American Jewish history. While this article will not shake up the world or change most historical interpretations of the period, it illustrates the problem of relying on names, assumptions, beliefs, and sometimes merely wishful thinking when historians and others search for Jewish participation in American history. Second, this article dovetails with Sussman's scholarship. His first book was an important study of Isaac Leeser and his role in antebellum Jewish history.⁴ This article is also about antebellum Jewish history. Moreover, we touch on the importance of Leeser and his newspaper, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, in understanding nineteenth-century American Jewish history. Finally, one of the few scholars of American Jewish history to urge caution in accepting the claim of Kaufman's Jewish identity was Sussman's rabbinical predecessor at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in suburban Philadelphia, the indefatigable historian Rabbi Admiral Bertram Wallace Korn.⁵ In his own work on Jews and American slavery, Korn listed Kaufman along with Senators David Levy Yulee of Florida and Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana as proslavery southern Jewish members of Congress, but he also put a caveat in a footnote: "Although Kaufman has generally been regarded as stemming from Jewish parents, there is no contemporary evidence for the assumption; all such testimony is of comparatively late date."⁶ We confirm Korn's suspicion that Kaufman did not have Jewish parents and, in fact, had no traceable Jewish ancestry.

This article also considers one of the central difficulties in American Jewish history: defining who was Jewish. According to Orthodox Jewish

Introduction to Jewish Life in the Mississippi Delta, 1943–1961," *Journal of Southern Jewish History* 22 (2022): 141–149.

4 Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

5 Korn was also the first rabbi to become an admiral in the Naval chaplain corps and the first rabbi to become a flag officer in the Navy. Ironically (or not), the second rabbi to achieve this rank was Rabbi Admiral Aaron Landes, whose synagogue was across the street from Korn's and Sussman's.

6 Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865: Address of the President," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 50 (1961): 191 and 191n97. Here he cited Henry Cohen et al., *One Hundred Years of Jewry in Texas* (Dallas, 1936), 8.

law (Halakhah), Jews are people who had Jewish mothers or formally converted to Judaism. But not all branches of Judaism accept this definition. Reform Jews have rejected the notion of matrilineal definition.⁷ Before the Rabbinic period (70–500 CE) Judaism followed the usual rule of the ancient world, and one’s status was patrilineal.⁸ Especially in the United States, people can be culturally, ethnically, or politically Jewish without any religious observance. In popular culture, some people describe themselves as being a “bagels and lox Jew,” implying that they are not religious but acknowledge and even embrace their Jewish culture.⁹ Thus, in the context of American history, there are many ways that people are perceived as Jews and identified as Jews. Similarly, the modern nation of Israel maintains both a religious (Halakhah) definition of a Jew for some purposes (such as marriage and burial) but also clearly has a political or ethnic definition of being a Jew for the right to move to Israel, which is “vested in a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew.”¹⁰ These parallel (and sometimes dueling

7 Note the comments of Rabbi Mark Washofsky, “How Does Reform Judaism Define Who is a Jew?,” Reform Judaism.org, <https://reformjudaism.org/learning/answers-jewish-questions/how-does-reform-judaism-define-who-jew> (accessed 7 July 2024): “In 1983 the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted the Resolution on Patrilineal Descent. According to this resolution, a child of one Jewish parent, who is raised exclusively as a Jew and whose Jewish status is ‘established through appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification with the Jewish faith and people’ is Jewish.” Similarly, Reconstructionist Judaism accepted patrilineal descent in 1968; see “What is Reconstructionist Judaism?,” My Jewish Learning, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/reconstructionist-judaism-today/> (accessed 9 July 2024).

8 “Prior to the Rabbinic period (70–500 CE), we find little trace of the principal of matrilineal descent. The Bible in fact seems to recognize a purely patrilineal descent, regardless of the identity of the mother” (Washofsky, “How Does Reform Judaism Define Who is a Jew?”).

9 Roberta Rosenthal Kwall, *The Myth of the Cultural Jew: Culture and Law in Jewish Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) argues that the “cultural Jew” is shaped by Jewish law and tradition. This is especially true for Jews who were raised in a Jewish environment and then later stopped practicing formal religion.

10 Law of Return in Israel illustrates the complexity of deciding who is a Jew. The law defines a Jew in the traditional Orthodox way: “4B. For the purposes of this Law, ‘Jew’

definitions) obviously did not apply to anywhere in the nineteenth century, but they illustrate the complexity of this issue and are helpful for historians of the American Jewish experience.

Some scholars assert that someone is Jewish, or not Jewish, if they perform, or do not perform, certain acts. For example, Gutow and James claim that Kaufman had Jewish ancestry (although they offer no evidence for this), but then assert he was not actually Jewish because “he married a non-Jew, received a Christian burial, and has no known Jewish descendants.”¹¹ We conclude that Kaufman was never Jewish and had no Jewish ancestry, but we do not base this conclusion on the Gutow/James rationale, which in fact rejects the Halakhah rule (a person born of a Jewish mother is Jewish) and defies logic, reality, and history. Two famous examples illustrate this. No one doubts that Judah P. Benjamin, the Confederate Secretary of State (and former US Senator), was Jewish. He was the son of two Jewish parents and while growing up in Charleston, South Carolina he attended congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. He never converted to any other faith, and he remained identified as a Jew during his long public and political career.¹² As a young lawyer in New Orleans, he married a Catholic woman

means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion.” However, under that law the following classifications of people are allowed to have immediate entry to Israel as immigrants: “4A. (a) The rights of a Jew under this Law and the rights of an *oleh* [immigrant] under the Nationality Law, 5712-1952***, as well as the rights of an *oleh* under any other enactment, are also vested in a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion.” “The Law of Return,” <https://www.nbn.org.il/life-in-israel/government-services/rights-and-benefits/the-law-of-return/>. While not directly admitting this, Israel clearly recognized the status of cultural, ethnic, and partially biological Jews, allowing them to move to Israel and be immediately welcomed, while denying that they might not be religiously Jewish. This law suggests a sort of “half-way covenant” for someone who has a Jewish father or a Jewish grandfather, but not a Jewish mother. But the law also makes clear that people born of a Jewish mother, like many who moved to Texas, remained Jewish, even if they did not practice their faith and married a non-Jew.

11 Gutow and James, “Most Politics,” 213.

12 It is possible his wife had him baptized as a Catholic while he was on his death bed.

of French ancestry, who raised their only child Catholic. When he died his widow had him buried in a Catholic cemetery in France with a priest officiating. But none of these aspects of his life and burial affected his status as a Jew under traditional Jewish law (born of a Jewish mother and had never formally left the faith or denounced it). Nor did being married to a Catholic woman mean he was not publicly seen as a Jew. Everyone knew he was Jewish. Similarly, US Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, the son of two Jewish immigrants from Austria, who had a bar mitzvah, was always publicly seen as Jewish. However, he married the daughter of a Protestant minister, and she never became Jewish. Frankfurter had no children (and thus no Jewish descendants), and he was buried, without a rabbi to officiate, in the historically Protestant Mount Auburn Cemetery, which contains a large gothic revival chapel with a cross on top of the main spire. There is no evidence he ever attended a synagogue after about age fifteen, except for ceremonial visits such as other people's weddings.¹³ But, like Benjamin no one doubts that Justice Frankfurter was Jewish. President Franklin D. Roosevelt nominated him for the Court in part because he was a Jew who was replacing the recently deceased Justice Benjamin Cardozo. Furthermore, he was a leading player in the American Zionist movement for much of his adult life. Especially on the early Texas frontier, a person could be identified as a Jew, while married to a Christian and never attending a synagogue or observing a Jewish holiday. We find absolutely no evidence that Kaufman was Jewish or had Jewish ancestry, but we do not reach this conclusion based on who he married, what faith his children or later descendants practiced, or how and where he is buried.

Beyond circumstances of birth, marriage, death, and interment, Jewish identification can be tied to ethnicity, culture, and asserting or at least acknowledging one's Jewish identity in public. Many Jewish immigrants to the United States never practiced their faith, affiliated with

13 Identification can go in the other direction as well. For example, General Mark W. Clark, one of the great military leaders of World War II, had a Jewish mother but formally converted to being an Episcopalian while at West Point, and to the best of our knowledge has never been considered Jewish, although he was ethnically part Jewish and Jewish under Halakhah until his conversion.

Jewish communities, nor openly acknowledged their lineage, but as children of Jewish mothers, they were still Jewish under traditional Jewish law, even if they married non-Jews. There are also people with Jewish fathers and presumptively Jewish last names, but with non-Jewish mothers who were considered Jewish, even if Orthodox rabbis did not consider them so. For example, Moses Levy graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1772, began to practice law in Philadelphia in 1778, and eventually won election as a judge. He was always known as a Jew and thus “faced antisemitic attacks from political and legal opponents.” But his mother was not Jewish, and there is no evidence that he formally converted to the faith of his Jewish father or that he was baptized in his mother’s faith.¹⁴ As historians we would consider Levy to be Jewish, as would the modern Reform Movement, but some people might not. Another test is whether people with mixed or ambiguous heritage self-identified as Jews. Max Baer, the world heavyweight boxing champion (1934–1935), who knocked out Hitler’s favorite boxer, Max Schmeling, had a Jewish father and a Christian mother and may or may not have been raised in some mixed Jewish tradition. But in the 1930s, in the face of Nazism in Europe and the pro-Nazi German American Bund, he fought in boxing rings with a large Star of David on his trunks.¹⁵ The son of a Jewish father, he was a Jew by very public self-identification.

We can ask a series of questions to determine whether or not Representative David S. Kaufman (or anyone else) might have been Jewish. These would include: 1) Did he have a Jewish mother? 2) Did he have a Jewish father? 3) Were his grandparents (especially his maternal grandmother) Jewish? 4) Did he formally convert to Judaism? 5) Was he seen by the public as a Jew during his lifetime (like Judge Levy in

14 Finkelman and Sussman, “American Revolution,” 13–14. In the modern era, websites and books focused on Jews, claim that the great actor Paul Newman was Jewish. He had a Jewish father and grew up in Shaker Heights, a very “Jewish neighborhood,” but his mother was Christian. See, e.g., “Paul Newman (1925–2008),” Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/paul-newman> (accessed 9 July 2024).

15 Mike Silver, *Stars in the Ring: Jewish Champions in the Golden Age of Boxing: A Photographic History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 95–97. Jacob Henry Baer, Max’ younger brother, who fought as “Buddy” Baer, also wore a Star of David.

Philadelphia)? 6) Did he publicly self-identify as a Jew by worshipping as a Jew, joining Jewish organizations, or publicly declaring that he was a Jew through words or deeds, as Max Baer did by wearing a Star of David on his boxing trunks? Alternatively, as an indication of not being Jewish, we might ask, did he proclaim to be Christian, use Christian theological language in public speeches, and never assert he was Jewish? We argue that the claim that Kaufman was Jewish or had any known or recognized Jewish ancestry fails all these tests for being Jewish. He was not Jewish, and he had no recognizable Jewish ancestry.

Jews in Unexpected Places

American Jewish history often focuses on identifying or discovering what we call “Jews in unexpected places.” These are Jews who stand out for their successes where there were very few Jews. Some are quite surprising, including not only Yulee, who was the first US senator from Florida, but also the first US senator from Alaska, Ernest H. Gruening, and two nineteenth-century Jewish senators from Louisiana and one governor of that state, the infamous Senator Benjamin (who was also the traitorous secretary of state for the Confederacy), the almost unknown and long forgotten Senator Benjamin F. Jonas, and Governor Michael Hahn.¹⁶ Two Civil War-era Midwestern and Western Jewish governors had virtually the same name: Edward Salomon of Wisconsin and his cousin, Brigadier General Edward S. Salomon of the Washington Territory. There were early Jewish governors of Idaho (Moses Alexander), Utah (Simon Bamberger), and New Mexico (Arthur Seligman), and, in our own time, two Jewish governors and one US senator from Hawaii (Linda Lingle, Josh Green, and Brian Schatz). Jews on the frontier were also successful in local politics, such as Jacob Raphael de Cordova who won a seat in the Texas state legislature in 1847, and Michael Seeligson,

16 Hahn also served two nonconsecutive terms in the US House of Representatives (1863–64; 1885–86). In 1865 the Louisiana legislature elected him to the US Senate, but the Senate refused to seat him because Louisiana, the former Confederate state, had not yet been readmitted to the Union. Amos E. Simpson and Vaughn Baker, “Michael Hahn: Steady Patriot,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 13 (1972): 229, 230.

who was elected mayor of Galveston, Texas in 1853.¹⁷ One of our favorites in this search of anomalies in American Jewish history is Wyatt Earp, the lawman, gambler, and early twentieth-century Hollywood personality, who was not Jewish but whose ashes are buried next to his common-law-wife, Josephine Sarah Marcus, at the Jewish Hills of Eternity Cemetery in Colma, California, just south of San Francisco. Since non-Jews cannot be buried in Jewish cemeteries, we can only wonder how the remains of the deputy marshal from the gunfight at the O.K. Corral ended up there.

Among the strangest of these unexpected “Jewish” figures is David Spangler Kaufman (1813–51), who served in the Republic of Texas Congress in the 1830s and 1840s, and in the US House of Representatives immediately after Texas statehood until his death in 1851. Kaufman was born and raised near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Princeton University in 1833 in a period when Princeton had only a “handful of Jewish Students.”¹⁸ Almost immediately after graduating from Princeton he migrated to Natchez, Mississippi where he studied law under John A. Quitman, a wealthy Mississippi planter and slaveowner who later became a governor and congressman, as well as a general in the Mexican-American War.¹⁹

17 Natalie Ornish, “De Cordova, Jacob Raphael (1808–1868),” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/de-cordova-jacob-raphael> (accessed 10 April 2024). Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier” 24–25 points out that de Cordova did not practice Judaism much, if at all, and married a Christian woman. But both his parents were Jewish, and his half-brother, Phineas, “was a cofounder of Austin’s Congregation Beth Israel.” By numerous standards, de Cordova was Jewish. See also Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 44, 47, 59.

18 “An Update on the Earliest Records of Jewish Students at Princeton,” University Archives, Princeton University (blog), <https://universityarchives.princeton.edu/2016/05/an-update-on-the-earliest-records-of-jewish-students-at-princeton/> (accessed 10 April 2024). Kaufman is not mentioned in this article. His record in the alumni archives says he graduated in 1833: “Kaufman, David S., 1833,” Undergraduate Alumni Records, 19th century, 1800–1899, https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/AC104-02_c2194?onlineToggle=false.

19 Natchez, on the Mississippi River, sent massive amounts of cotton to New Orleans, where it was then sent to Europe or other parts of the United States, especially New England. See Thomas W. Cutrer, “Quitman, John Anthony (1798–1858),” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas

Kaufman practiced law in Natchitoches, Louisiana for about two years and, in 1837, moved to the newly independent Republic of Texas. Since the number of extant Kaufman papers is limited, we have no evidence that would shed light on why he left the United States for the new Republic of Texas, but it seems likely that he saw opportunity in this brand-new nation, where a Princeton graduate who was also a (somewhat) experienced attorney could quickly achieve fame and fortune. If this was his motivation, he made the right move. He quickly won a seat in the Republic's Congress, twice serving as speaker of the House of Representatives before serving in the Texas Senate. He then became a diplomat, as the Texas Charge d'Affaires to the United States until Texas entered the Union in December 1845. Kaufman was then elected to the US House of Representatives. Kaufman County and the county seat, Kaufman (about thirty-five miles southeast of Dallas), are named for him. Many of the sources that we discuss below thus assert that half of the first Texas delegation to the US House of Representatives was Jewish.

Kaufman died unexpectedly in January 1851, while serving in Congress. The House held services for him with a eulogy by the Presbyterian minister Ralph Gurley, who served as chaplain of the House. In his eulogy, Gurley referred to "Christian revelation," "Jesus Christ," and "our Saviour."²⁰ By 1851, a few Jews had served in the House and one, Yulee, in the Senate. Jews were a small minority in the country but hardly unknown or exotic. While there was no synagogue in Washington at this time, there were Jewish communities in nearby Baltimore, Richmond, and Philadelphia, and it surely would have been possible to bring in a learned Jewish leader, such as Philadelphia's Isaac Leeser, to give the eulogy if *anyone* in Congress thought Kaufman was Jewish. But no one thought he was. Not surprisingly, after Kaufman's death there was no discussion of him in any Jewish publications, because no one thought he was Jewish.

State Historical Association, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/quitman-john-anthony> (accessed 15 July 2024).

20 *Obituary Services, on the Death of Hon. David S. Kaufman, of Texas, in the Congress of the United States, February 1st, and 3d, 1851* (Washington, DC: J. T. Towers, 1851), 13–16.

In 1888, Isaac Markens published the first history of Jews in the United States, *Hebrews in America*. Markens wrote about Jewish political, social, business, and religious leaders, including Jacob Raphael de Cordova, the most important Jew in early Texas. He also wrote about Representative Lewis Levin of Pennsylvania (the first Jew elected to Congress), New York Representative Emanuel B. Hart, Senators Yulee of Florida and Benjamin of Louisiana, and about the Texas Jewish communities in Galveston and Houston.²¹ However, Markens never mentions Kaufman. As we note below, no Jewish source had ever mentioned Kaufman while he was alive, and he is not mentioned in the first history of Jews in the United States. At this point, Kaufman was not “Jewish” or on the radar of anyone in the Jewish world.

Kaufman “Becomes” Jewish

Six years after Markens published his book, Kaufman suddenly appeared as a “Jewish” political figure. In 1894, more than four decades after Kaufman’s death, Rabbi Henry Cohen (1863–1952), who served as the spiritual leader of Congregation B’nai Israel in Galveston, Texas, from 1888 to 1952, wrote a paragraph on “Davis Kauffman,” [*sic*] in an article on “The Settlement of Jews in Texas,” published by the American Jewish Historical Society.²² Cohen gave no background on Kaufman other than noting his Pennsylvania birth, and he provided no information on his relationship to Judaism other than claiming that he was Jewish. It is not clear why Cohen asserted that Kaufman was Jewish. We assume that he thought Kaufman was Jewish because of his name. In a single paragraph in the 1894 article, Cohen summarized some of Kaufman’s accomplishments and at the same time turned him into a “Jew.”

Cohen enthusiastically sought to find all the early Jews in Texas. One

21 Isaac Markens, *The Hebrews in America: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (New York: self-pub., 1888).

22 Henry Cohen, “Settlement of the Jews in Texas,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 2 (1894): 139–156. See generally Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999), 58–79. Weiner describes Cohen as “the Dean of Lone Star Rabbis” and as “the chief rabbi of Texas,” while admitting that “such a position” does not exist.

scholar recently praised Cohen as a “meticulous researcher,” but at least in the case of Kaufman, this is clearly not true.²³ It is doubtful Cohen did any research on Kaufman or read anything Kaufman wrote. Had Cohen investigated Kaufman, he might have been less certain that he was Jewish. As we will show below, in addition to the very Christian eulogy for Kaufman in Congress after his death, there was ample evidence of his Christian faith and that of his family. Everything in Cohen’s paragraph on Kaufman appears to come directly from an article in *The Encyclopedia of the New West*, published in 1881, which he cited in a footnote. That article, which was considerably longer than what Cohen wrote in 1894, did not mention anything about Kaufman’s faith, ethnicity, or family background. The words “Jew” or “Jewish” do not appear in the article. In other words, Cohen cited a source to prove that Kaufman was Jewish, but the source does not say that.²⁴

Thus, Kaufman emerged as “Jewish” because a rabbi in Galveston, who was not a historian and, as best we can tell, did no research on Kaufman, assumed that the first Congressman from Texas was Jewish because of his name. It is also possible that some congregant or another Jew in Galveston (or maybe somewhere else in Texas) told Cohen that Kaufman was Jewish. But Kaufman had been dead for more than four decades by this time. At the time of his death, no one in Texas (or anywhere else) thought he was Jewish, and he had never lived anywhere near Galveston. So, it is highly unlikely that very many (if any) Jews in that city (or anywhere else in the state) had met him or knew much about him.

Cohen’s parents immigrated from Poland to England, and Cohen grew up in an Ashkenazi community in London. He graduated from Jews’ College in London (today called London School of Jewish Studies) and spent a year leading a congregation in Kingston, Jamaica. In 1885,

23 Quote from Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier,” 21. Oddly, Cohen never mentioned Jacob de Cordova or his half-brother Phineas, who “was a cofounder of Austin’s Congregation Beth Israel.”

24 “Hon. David S. Kaufman,” in *The Encyclopedia of the New West*, ed. William S. Speer and John Henry Brown (Marshall, TX: The United States Biographical Publishing Company, 1881), 327–328.

at age twenty-two, he moved to a synagogue in Woodville, Mississippi, and he became the rabbi at Congregation B'nai Israel in Galveston, Texas in 1888.²⁵ Cohen's background may explain why he assumed that Kaufman was Jewish because of his name. As a recent immigrant to the United States, who had only lived in the deep South, he probably had no idea that central Pennsylvania, where Kaufman came from, had large populations of Amish, Mennonites, Lutherans, and other German and central European Christians, and, as we demonstrate below, Kaufman was a common last name among Christians in that part of the United States. Some of the Kaufmans in Galveston were probably not Jewish, but many probably were.²⁶ It is likely that the British-born and educated Cohen easily assumed that someone named "David Kaufman" was Jewish. Thus, in 1894, Kaufman became "Jewish" at the hands of an immigrant rabbi with no training in history or research, who was trying to write about the sparse history of Jews in his adopted home on the Gulf of Mexico and who probably had no knowledge of the huge community of Christian "Pennsylvania Dutch" where Kaufman came from.²⁷

We do not mean to disparage Cohen. He was trying hard to find all the Jews he could in his adopted state. But, as the scholar who praised Cohen as a "meticulous researcher" also noted, Cohen "cast a wide net in his search for early Jews, and often erred on the side of accepting someone as a Jew even if he or she was not." Thus, he "identified every Jew in frontier Texas—and then some."²⁸ Kaufman was one of the "and then some." Had Cohen done any research on Kaufman, read some of his published speeches (which we describe below) or his eulogy in

25 Weiner, *Jewish Stars*, 61–65.

26 At this time there were about fifteen people named "Kaufman" in Galveston, with various spellings; see Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston: 1899–1900 (p. 124), Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth894022/m1/160/?q=kaufman> (accessed 15 July 2024).

27 Significantly, Cohen, "Settlement," never mentioned Jacob de Cordova, the most prominent Jew who had lived there up to that time—a man who was born a Jew, spoke fluent Hebrew, and died a Jew, and whose father had been president of the famous Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. This failure suggests the paucity of Cohen's research, his ignorance of Texas history, or both.

28 Bryan Edward Stone, "On the Frontier," 21.

Congress, or examined the community in Pennsylvania where Kaufman came from, he might have wondered why anyone would think Kaufman was Jewish. Nevertheless, once Cohen anointed Kaufman as Jewish, other scholars and more popular writers repeated his mistake.

A year after Cohen published this article, Simon Wolf published his massive compilation of Jews who had served in the Civil War and other conflicts. Relying on Cohen, Wolf identified “Davis S. Kauffman” [*sic*] as a Jewish soldier serving in the Mexican War, “at the battle of Neches,” and later “a member of Congress.”²⁹ A few years later the *American Jewish Year*, edited by the very important early Jewish scholar, Cyrus Adler, listed Kaufman as a Jewish member of Congress.³⁰ Anointed by Cohen as a Jew, two much more important players in the Jewish intellectual, Wolf and Adler, accepted Cohen’s determination that Kaufman was Jewish. In 1936 Cohen participated in the publication of a small book on Jews in Texas, and simply repeated what he had said forty years earlier about Kaufman.³¹

Subsequent books and articles on Jews in Texas continued to follow Cohen’s lead. The entry on Kaufman in the authoritative and scholarly reference work, the *Handbook of Texas* tells us that “No other Jewish Texan served in Congress until the 1970s,” implying of course that Kaufman was Jewish.³² The *Handbook* is published by the Texas State Historical Association, edited by historians with many entries written by professionals in the field. It is fully online and invites people to offer corrections for it. As of this writing no one has done this for Kaufman. This vetted “bible” of Texas history follows Cohen’s conclusion that Kaufman was Jewish. It is one of the first places any scholar or layperson

29 Wolf, *American Jew*, 74. Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company, 1895) 74. Available at The Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/47135/47135-h/47135-h.htm>

30 Cyrus Adler, ed., *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 2, 1900–1901 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1900), 519.

31 Henry Cohen, David Lekowitz, and Ephraim Frisch, *One Hundred Years of Jewry in Texas* (Texas Centennial Exposition, 1936), 8.

32 Natalie Ornish, “Kaufman, David Spangler (1813–1851),” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/kaufman-david-spangler> (accessed 8 July 2024).

would look to find basic information about Jews in early Texas, and it has misled anyone interested in Kaufman for a very long time.

In 1989 Natalie Ornish published *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, asserting that Kaufman was Jewish. Although she never explained his Jewish background or heritage, she noted that in his Princeton University student file some unknown person had written “Hebrew extraction” on form. We will return to this document shortly. Despite no direct evidence about Kaufman’s background Ornish clearly asserts his Jewish faith and ethnicity by devoting many pages to him in her book on Jewish Texans. In 2011 Ornish published a new edition of *Pioneer Jewish Texans*. This book, published by a serious academic press, was presumably vetted by scholars and reflected any new scholarship since the book first appeared in 1989, but it had nothing new on Kaufman.³³ Thus, the myth first created in the late nineteenth century by Henry Cohen persisted into the twenty-first century.

In a relatively recent doctoral dissertation, Marilyn Kay Cheatham Goldman asserts that Kaufman was Jewish, noting that “Kaufman’s Jewishness has been questioned; however, he is included here because most historians consider him Jewish.” Apparently relying on Ornish, Goldman also asserts Kaufman’s Jewish identity because “Princeton records relating to Kaufman reveal that someone wrote in the margins of the registration papers that Kaufman was of ‘Hebrew extraction.’ Since this is not a modern description of a Jew, this notation must have been added about the time Kaufman studied at Princeton.”³⁴ While Goldman is correct that “Hebrew” is not usually a modern term, sometimes it is.³⁵ But she is also clearly wrong in asserting that “Hebrew” was not used well after Kaufman graduated from Princeton in 1833. In 1873—forty years after Kaufman graduated from Princeton—the emerging Reform

33 Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, 63–68.

34 Marilyn Kay Cheatham Goldman, “Jewish Fringes Texas Fabric: Nineteenth Century Jewish Merchants Living in Texas Reality and Myth” (PhD diss., Texas A & M University, 2003), 189.

35 But see “Did Hebrews Discover America,” *Harvard Crimson*, 22 October 1970, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1970/10/22/did-hebrews-discover-america-pshould-we/> (accessed 10 April 2024).

movement created a national organization, The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and two years later founded Hebrew Union College. The Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Associations (YMHA/YWHA) began in the 1870s, more than four decades after Kaufman graduated, and were going strong well into the mid-twentieth century. New York's 92nd Street Y flourishes to this day. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), was established in 1881, almost a half century after Kaufman graduated and thirty years after his death, and still exists with that name. Similarly, in 1888, Markens published the book *The Hebrews in America*.³⁶ In 1922, the notoriously antisemitic Supreme Court Justice James Clark McReynolds refused to attend a ceremonial event in Philadelphia, writing Chief Justice William Howard Taft, "As you know, I am not always to be found when there is a Hebrew abroad. Therefore, my 'inability' to attend must not surprise you." The pencil notation, "Hebrew extraction," could thus easily have been added in the late nineteenth or the first third of the twentieth century, during a period when there was rising antisemitism, concern about the "extraction" of people, and "Hebrew" was used by antisemites as well as philosemites.³⁷

In 2007, Hollace Ava Weiner, the author/editor of *Lone Stars of David*, called Kaufman "the Jewish Sam Houston." Having made this categorical

36 Markens, *Hebrews*.

37 Justice James C. McReynolds to Chief Justice William Howard Taft, c. February 1922, quoted in Alpheus Thomas Mason, *William Howard Taft: Chief Justice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964), 216–217. The "Hebrew" he was referring to was Justice Louis D. Brandeis. In 1932, at the time of Justice Benjamin Cardozo's swearing in McReynolds told Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, "For four thousand years the Lord tried to make something out of the Hebrews, then gave it up as impossible and turned them out to prey on mankind in general—like fleas on the dog, for example." David. G. Dalin, *Jewish Justices of the Supreme Court: From Brandeis to Kagan* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 104. Similarly, although not necessarily antisemitic, in 1936 "a Milwaukee district attorney" asked the state attorney general "whether orthodox Hebrews might be permitted to vote as absentee voters prior to election day, 7 April, since their religious precepts prohibited them from voting during the week in which the elections take place, as this was their religious holiday season." The state attorney general said that this was indeed permissible. See William W. Boyer, Jr., "Religion and the Police Power in Wisconsin," *Marquette Law Review* 37 (1953): 14.

assertion of his faith, she noted that the evidence of his Judaism is “conflicting.” Weiner pointed out that US Representative Martin Frost (who actually *was* the first Jewish US representative from Texas, serving from 1979 to 2005) argued that Kaufman was not Jewish because he was buried in the Congressional cemetery in Washington, DC without a Jewish ceremony.³⁸ Since there was no formal Jewish community in Washington until 1852, and the city’s synagogue was not incorporated until 1856, it is not entirely clear how there could have been a Jewish funeral in the city.³⁹ But Frost’s assertion about where Kaufman was buried is based on incorrect information. According to the archivist at the Congressional Historic Cemetery, Kaufman was never buried there. Rather, “Kaufman’s body was placed in the Public Vault 3 Feb 1851 and presumably taken from there to Texas.”⁴⁰ Representative Frost was correct that Kaufman was not Jewish, but where he was buried does not prove that. After all, based on Frost’s logic, many of the more than 5,500 Jewish veterans buried at Arlington National Cemetery and those buried in various Civil War cemeteries and military cemeteries overseas were not really “Jewish.” Another chapter in *Lone Stars of David* asserts that Kaufman was “of Jewish descent” but not actually Jewish because “he married a non-Jew, received a Christian burial, and had no Jewish descendants.”⁴¹

38 Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, eds., *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas* (Waltham, MA and Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, in association with the Texas Jewish Historical Society, 2007), 7 and Natalie Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2011 [1989]), 63–68.

39 Bill Davis, “Washington Hebrew of Congregation—The Early Years,” Washington Hebrew Congregation, 15 April 2022, <https://www.whctemple.org/2022/04/washington-hebrew-congregation-the-early-years/> (accessed 10 July 2024). See also “An Act for the Benefit of the Hebrew Congregation in the City of Washington,” Act of 2 June 1856, Chap. XXXVII, 11 Stat. 449.

40 Email from Dayle Dooley, archivist, Historic Congressional Cemetery, to Candace Jackson Gray, 10 May 2022.

41 Weiner and Roseman, *Lone Stars*, 7, 22, 213. See also Matt Lebovic, “For the Jews of Arlington National Cemetery, American Dreams Were Writ Large,” *Times of Israel*, 28 May 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/for-the-jews-of-arlington-national-cemetery-american-dreams-were-writ-large/> and Bob Gerwin et al., “Burial of Jewish War Veterans in Military Cemeteries,” Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, <https://>

But, as we noted above, none of these things would prove that he was not Jewish. The authors here seem to confuse being Jewish with being religiously observant. The point here is that a very recent book, published by the scholarly press of an elite Jewish university (Brandeis University), asserts that he was a Jewish political and military leader (like Houston) or that he came from a Jewish family, while quoting a member of Congress that he was not Jewish with an explanation that does not prove that. The member of Congress was correct, but for the wrong reason.

In 2011, Rabbi Kurt F. Stone, a prolific author who has taught history at the university level, listed Kaufman as a Jewish member of Congress. Conceding that his “Jewish lineage is somewhat murky,” Stone included Kaufman because “at least early sources, including the *American Jewish Yearbook* of 1901–1902, refer to him as being of ‘Hebrew extraction.’” In fact the *Jewish Yearbook* (it is actually the Yearbook of 1900–01) did not say he was of “Hebrew extraction,” but simply listed him along with twenty-one other members of the House and Senate identified as being Jewish. There is nothing in the Yearbook about why he is listed, or who his family was. All the facts of his life came from Cohen. Stone further supported Kaufman’s inclusion by noting that he figures “prominently” in Ornish’s book and thus “deserves a spot on the roster of Minyanites” in Congress. Finally, like Goldman, Stone, apparently relying on Ornish, explained that, in 1978, an archivist at Princeton found a pencil notation in his student file “of Hebrew extraction,” although Stone admitted that no one knows when that notation was made, who made it, or what was the basis of the notation.⁴²

dc.jewish-funerals.org/burial-jewish-war-veterans-military-cemeteries (accessed 9 July 2024). Kaufman was possibly later reinterred in the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, as noted in “David Spangler Kaufman,” Texas State Cemetery, https://cemetery.tspb.texas.gov/pub/user_form.asp?step=1&pers_id=32 (accessed 9 July 2024), but there do not appear to be any records of this. Email from Will Erwin, senior historian, Texas State Cemetery, to Candace Jackson Gray, 21 March 2022.

42 Kurt F. Stone, *The Jews of Capitol Hill: A Compendium of Jewish Congressional Members* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2011). Stone cites the 1989 edition of the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, but the current edition of the directory says nothing about his faith, and it does not appear that other editions did either, so the citation was probably not to his faith or ethnicity, but to the facts of his career; see “Kaufman, David Spangler

The Princeton records are curious. At least three authors—Ornish, Goldman, and Kurt Stone—rely on the records to prove that Kaufman was Jewish. As noted above, Goldman asserts they are contemporaneous to Kaufman being a student at Princeton in the early 1830s, calling them his “registration papers,” and claiming that the words “Hebrew extraction” were written on it when he was an undergraduate. However, a careful examination of the Princeton file demonstrates that the Ornish-Goldman-Stone analysis was quite wrong.

The term “Hebrew extraction” is not on a student’s “registration papers” from the 1830s. The term was written on a printed form that comes from a much later date, probably sometime between 1917 and the late 1930s. As we have already noted, in this period the term “Hebrew” was commonly used to describe Jews. At the beginning of this file is a printed letter explaining that the following documents were prepared for the creation of “General Biographical Catalog, 1746 to 1916,” of Princeton students to be edited by Varnum Lansing Collins, who was the secretary of Princeton University from 1917 to his death in 1936. Sometime around 1917, Collins began the arduous task of having his staff of researchers find biographical information on every Princeton graduate before 1917, placing the information on a three page form with fifteen biographical categories that was filled out for this project. Under the category “Family Background,” on the Kaufman form, the researcher wrote “Hebrew extraction.” In the same handwriting are notes about his career, the name of his wife, and the date of his death in 1851. This information, all on the same form and all in the same handwriting proves that the term “Hebrew extraction” was not on Kaufman’s student file from the early 1830s, since obviously a form from the 1830s could not have included information about who he married, his career, and when he died. Rather all of this information was put on a research form printed a century later. We can thus date the “Hebrew extraction” notation to a point after 1917 and before the death of Collins in 1936.

Some of the information on the form appears to come directly from

(1813–1851),” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/K000021> (accessed 4 April 2024).

Cohen's published statements about Kaufman, and the *American Jewish Year Book* of 1900–1901. This would explain why the researcher at Princeton thought he was Jewish and used the notation “Hebrew extraction” to describe him. The record also includes a typed short biography of Kaufman taken directly from a 1935 book on the history of Texas.⁴³ Suggesting that this form with the term “Hebrew extraction” on it dates from middle of the 1930s, more than a century after Kaufman graduated from the college. The file also contains documents, including letters from Ornish asking for copies of these records. The statement “Hebrew extraction” was clearly written well after Cohen published his work asserting that Kaufman was Jewish. The Princeton researchers accepted Cohen's unsourced claim that Kaufman was Jewish and the repetition of this by Simon Wolf and then by Cyrus Adler in the comprehensive second volume of the *American Jewish Year Book*. category of “family record,” and did not include the other information that the form called for, such as the names of Kaufman's parents. Had they done any of this work, they might have concluded that Kaufman was not Jewish. But we have no information on who the researchers were, or what time constraints they were under. In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century scholars used the notation to “prove” that Cohen was correct. Ornish seized on the two words, and everyone followed her.

In their most recent work neither Goldman nor Bryan Stone say Kaufman is Jewish, but they also do not say he is *not* Jewish, even though previously both had said he was either Jewish (Goldman) or of Jewish descent (Stone). In her 2003 PhD dissertation, as noted above, Goldman emphatically asserted that Kaufman was Jewish. But in her 2022 article on Jews in Texas from 1830 to 1845, Goldman made no mention of Kaufman.⁴⁴ This was the period when Kaufman rose from a recent

43 Baker, Philemon Morris [1833] to Steward, Daniel Jackson [1834], box 85, Development–Alumni Records, Alumni Records, Undergraduate, Princeton University Archives, Princeton, New Jersey. We thank the archivists at Princeton University for providing photocopies of these records. The typed short biography of Kaufman is from T. Z. Fulmore, *The History and Geography of Texas as Told in County Names* (Austin: Steck, 1935), 188–189.

44 Kay C. Goldman, “Early Texas Jewish Settlers, 1830–1845: Were They Really Jewish, and If So, Who Were They?,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 125 (2022): 271–288.

immigrant to a major political figure in the Republic of Texas. This omission is curious, since the article is titled “Early Texas Jewish Settlers,” and its subtitle asks, “Were They Really Jewish and If So, Who Were They?” If Goldman no longer believed that Kaufman was Jewish, despite her firm assertion in her dissertation that he was, this would have been the place to say that. Goldman’s failure to mention Kaufman may mean she believed the evidence on Kaufman’s Judaism is so strong that there was no reason to discuss him. Similarly, Bryan Edward Stone, the author of *The Chosen Folks* (2010), the most important scholarly book on Jews in Texas, mentions Kaufman once as a “notable” Texan without any discussion, one way or the other, about him being Jewish. But, as noted earlier, in 2007 Stone argued that Kaufman was of “Jewish descent.”⁴⁵

Thus, the cascade of the myth of the Jewish representative from antebellum Texas has continued, from Cohen in the 1890s to Simon Wolf to the *American Jewish Year Book*, to the Princeton archives, to the *Handbook of Texas*, to Ornish, to Rabbi Stone, to Goldman and Bryan Stone. All said he was Jewish or of Jewish heritage. Bertram Korn expressed doubts but nevertheless included him among antebellum southern Jews in Congress. Gutow and James assert he “was of Jewish descent,” then categorically assert he was not Jewish, because he had a non-Jewish wife, no Jewish descendants, and had a Christian burial. But as we noted above, such circumstances of his life do not prove if he was Jewish or not.⁴⁶

The Center for Jewish History and the American Jewish Archives also seem to believe Kaufman was Jewish. The Center for Jewish History contains a legal document signed by Kaufman, presumably because the Center believes he was Jewish.⁴⁷ Similarly, the American Jewish Archives

45 Bryan Edward Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 35 and Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier,” 22. Stone also asserts that Kaufman was a “prominent political figure during...the Texas Revolution,” but all the evidence we have found suggests that he moved to Texas after the Revolution was over.

46 Steve Gutow and Laurie Baker James, “Most Politics is Local,” in Weiner and Roseman, 212–213.

47 David S. Kaufman Legal Agreement, Collection P-441, box P13, Center for Jewish History, New York, <https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/3/resources/618>.

collections contain a few documents relating to Kaufman, which were donated by Rabbi Korn.⁴⁸ These two archives are the premier repositories for the documents of American Jewish history. The Kaufman documents are apparently in their holdings because these important research centers think he was Jewish, or, in the case of the donations by Rabbi Korn, the American Jewish Archives accepts Korn's belief that Kaufman might have been Jewish.

The idea that Kaufman was Jewish also permeates public websites such as Wikipedia. Like other scholars, we would never use these sites to support scholarly conclusions. We cite them here not to prove who Kaufman was, or whether he was Jewish, but to show that in the world of non-scholarly history Kaufman is also perceived as Jewish. The Jewish Virtual Library, edited by a very serious scholar, lists Kaufman on a page about Jewish members of Congress and also has a very short biography of him.⁴⁹ Anyone interacting with the public on the issue of Jews in politics is likely to start there, following in the footsteps of Rabbi Cohen and so many others. A website connected to the history of Kaufman County, Texas asserts: "He was born 18 December 1813 at Boiling Springs, Cumberland Co PA" and that "after he became an adult David practiced the Jewish faith which was not of his heritage or lineage, nor the religion of his wife, and this fact has puzzled historians for more than a century." This statement is at best bizarre. The website provides no support for his alleged conversion or Jewish practice, although, as we note below, this site does present significant genealogical evidence that he was *not* from a Jewish family.⁵⁰ Similarly, Wikipedia tells us that

48 Email from Joe Weber, managing archivist at the American Jewish Archives, 5 April 2024: "we have two speeches that Kaufman gave to congress on slavery. They were donated by Bertram Korn when he gave his collection to the AJA."

49 "Jewish Members of U.S. Congress: House of Representatives (1845–present)," Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-representatives-in-the-united-states> (accessed 15 July 2024) and "David Spangler Kaufman (1813–1851)," Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/david-spangler-kaufman> (accessed 15 July 2024).

50 Kathy Kelley Hunt, "Kaufman County's Tie to the 'Underground Railroad,'" U.S. African American Griots, <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~aagriots/TX/kaufman/railroad.htm> (accessed 4 April 2024).

Kaufman “was of German-Jewish and Mennonite descent.” The rest of the entry does not say anything about his Jewish heritage, but it does say a lot about his Mennonite family. On one point, however, Wikipedia is more accurate about Kaufman than some Jewish historians and resources we have mentioned. Unlike the *American Jewish Year Book* in 1900–01 or the modern electronic data base, the Virtual Jewish Library, the *Handbook of Texas*, and numerous scholars of Texas, Wikipedia does *not* list Kaufman in its entry on Jewish members of Congress.⁵¹ Our point here is not that these non-scholarly sites are always trustworthy sources for history (although we usually find Jewish Virtual Library quite accurate). Our point is that the public perception of Kaufman and the sources that students and non-scholars are likely to use continue to repeat the statements of Rabbi Cohen and the scholars who incorrectly claim Kaufman is Jewish.

Kaufman’s Non-Jewish Family

But was this lawyer and politician actually Jewish? Despite what most historians and authoritative resources like the *Handbook of Texas* say, we conclude that there is absolutely no evidence that he was Jewish or had any known Jewish ancestry, or that he ever became Jewish or practiced Judaism. Although his family might have had some distant Jewish ancestry in Germany or elsewhere in central Europe and some residual “Jewish DNA,” there does not appear to be anything about him that was Jewish—except perhaps his name. So, we start with the name. To borrow from Shakespeare, was Kaufman “the Jewish rose of Texas”⁵² because of his name?

“David S. Kaufman” certainly sounds like a Jewish name. The names of other members of Kaufman’s family also sound Jewish; his brothers are Joseph, Abraham, and Daniel, and his father was also Abraham

51 “David S. Kaufman,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_S._Kaufman (accessed 9 July 2024) and “List of Jewish Members of the United States Congress,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jewish_members_of_the_United_States_Congress (accessed 9 July 2024).

52 “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet.” William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene 2 (first published 1597).

Kaufman.⁵³ These names makes David seem even more Jewish. But eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Christians often had Old Testament names. There were the Revolutionary War leaders *Benjamin* Franklin and *Samuel* Adams, as well as generals *Nathaniel* Greene, *Benjamin* Lincoln, and *Daniel* Morgan, and early Vice Presidents *Aaron* Burr, *Daniel* Tompkins, and *Levi* Morton. In early 1821 *Moses* Austin received permission to bring American settlers to Spanish Tejas, but like the Biblical Moses, he did not live long enough to enter his new promised land. Other western adventurers, frontiersmen, and explorers include *Daniel* Boone, *Zebulon* Pike, *Sam* Houston, and *David* Crockett. Levi Coffin was a leading antebellum Quaker abolitionist.⁵⁴ Most famously, there is the sixteenth president, *Abraham* Lincoln.⁵⁵ First names are

53 Daniel lived his entire life in Pennsylvania and, unlike his proslavery brother David, was an active abolitionist. He was sued for helping slaves escape. *Oliver v. Kauffman*, 18 F. Cas. 657 (C.C.E.D. Pa. 1850). For a discussion of this case, see Paul Finkelman, *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 139–41, 251–255. See also “*Oliver et al. v. Kauffman* and Fugitive Slaves,” Blog Divided (blog), <https://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/blogdivided/2010/06/28/oliver-et-al-v-kauffman-and-the-verdict-on-fugitive-slaves-in-boiling-springs/> (accessed 15 July 2024).

54 Other signers of the Constitution apart from Franklin and Adams include *Nathaniel* Gorham, William *Samuel* Johnson, *David* Brearly, *Jonathan* Dayton, *Jared* Ingersoll, *Jacob* Broom, *Daniel* Carroll, and *Abraham* Baldwin. In addition to Franklin and *Samuel* Adams, signers of the Declaration of Independence include *Josiah* Bartlett, *Samuel* Chase, *Abraham* Clark, *Benjamin* Harrison, *Joseph* Hewes, *Samuel* Huntington, and Dr. *Benjamin* Rush. On Levi Coffin, see “Levi Coffin,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/people/levi-coffin.htm> (accessed 15 July 2024).

55 We are reminded of the dialogue in the great television series “All in the Family,” where Archie Bunker was ranting about Jews:

Archie: “That’s something the hebes do. They change their last names but keep their first names so that they’ll still recognize each other.”

Mike: “Whaddya mean, Arch?”

Archie: “Well, you take a guy like Isaac Schwartz. He changes ‘Schwartz’ to ‘Smith’ but he leaves Isaac. So he’s Isaac Smith. Jacob Cohen, he becomes Jacob Kane. See?”

Mike (sarcastically): “Yeah, I see what you mean, Arch. Like Abraham...Lincoln.”

Pause.

hardly a key to Jewish identity. Finally, we note that this issue is dedicated to a rabbi named “Lance,” with the Jewish author of this article named “Paul.” Sir Lancelot and St. Paul are hardly names we associate with Jews.

The name “Kaufman” (with various spellings) is also problematic for identifying faith and ethnicity. It is found frequently among Mennonites, Amish, and other Christians with German backgrounds, especially in Pennsylvania. As the genealogy company 23 and Me notes:

the surname Kauffman is very common among the American Mennonites and Amish; variants, such as Kaufman and Coffman, are also found. The main progenitors of the Mennonite bearers of this name were of Swiss ancestry but came to PA (Lancaster and Berks counties) from the Palatinate, Germany, in the 18th century. Later Mennonite immigrants bearing this name came to the US also from Galicia and Volhynia in Eastern Europe.⁵⁶

While most Jews probably see “Kaufman” as a Jewish name, in the United States today only 9% of people with this last name are Ashkenazi Jewish, while more than 42% are Christians of German or French ancestry and another 30% are non-Jews of British ancestry.⁵⁷

David’s paternal grandfather, John Kaufman, married Christianna Landis. Her first name is about as Christian as you can get. Her family name is common in southern Germany and Switzerland, and, according to the Mennonite Heritage Center, is heavily connected to Mennonites in Pennsylvania.⁵⁸ According to 23 and Me, the name Landis (or Landes)

Edith: “I didn’t know Lincoln was Jewish.”

See Paul Farhi, “Archie Bunker’s Heart: Carroll O’Connor Pumped A Tough Role Full of Truth,” *Washington Post*, 22 June 2001, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2001/06/23/archie-bunkers-heart/cec2357f-4318-436f-8c47-4e7f6155aa5f/>.

56 “The Meaning of Kauffman,” 23 and Me Discovery Tool, <https://discover.23andme.com/last-name/Kauffman> (accessed 15 July 2024).

57 *Ibid.*

58 Forrest Moyer, “Our Immigrant Heritage: Landis/Landes,” Mennonite Heritage Center, 5 March 2018, <https://mhpc.org/our-immigrant-heritage-landis-landes/> (accessed 4 April 2024).

is associated with German immigrants to Pennsylvania (the Pennsylvania “Dutch” as they are commonly known), who settled in areas such as the city of Landisville, in Lancaster County. However, there are also Jews named “Landis” or “Landes,” including Rabbi Admiral Aaron Landes, who was the senior rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom, the famous Frank Lloyd Wright synagogue in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, which is across the street from Rabbi Sussman’s synagogue. But the vast majority of people named “Landis” in the United States are Christian, whose ancestors came mostly from Germany and Switzerland.⁵⁹

Other indications of David Kaufman’s religion and ethnicity reaffirm that he was not Jewish. John Kauffman (1776–1851), his father’s first cousin (David’s first cousin once removed), was a Mennonite bishop in Annville, Pennsylvania. David’s great-grandfather Frederick Kauffman (1709–89), who immigrated to Pennsylvania in 1742, was also a Mennonite bishop.⁶⁰ David’s brother Abraham attended Andover Theological Seminary, was ordained as a Presbyterian minister, and later changed denominations and became an Episcopal priest.⁶¹ A Jewish family in the early nineteenth century would almost certainly not have sent its son to a Protestant seminary to become minister. We also know that David Kaufman’s parents and other relatives are buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery, a Lutheran cemetery, in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania with hundreds of other people with German and English names, none of whom appear to be Jewish.⁶²

59 Out of all people in the United States with this name, 47% are of Swiss or German ancestry, 35% are of British Christian ancestry, and 5.3% are Ashkenazi Jewish; see “The Meaning of Landis,” 23 and Me Discovery Tool, <https://discover.23andme.com/last-name/Landis> (accessed 4 April 2024), citing the *Dictionary of American Family Names*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

60 Email from Joe Springer, curator, Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, to Candace Jackson Gray, 14 March 2022.

61 Hunt, “Kaufman County’s Tie.”

62 “Dickinson-Mt. Zion Lutheran Church Graveyard, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania,” <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~pacumber/zcc/mtzion.htm> (accessed 4 April 2024). See also Hunt, “Kaufman County’s Tie.”

The Lack of Contemporary Evidence that Kaufman Was Jewish

We have found no mention of Kaufman in contemporary Jewish sources during his lifetime. An important example of this is the correspondence of Isaac Leeser and articles in his newspaper, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*. The paper reported on Jewish life in the mid-1840s and early 1850s, when David S. Kaufman of Texas served in Congress. By 1850, Leeser had some subscribers in Texas. As Bryan Stone observed, Leeser “saw world Jewry’s future on the expanding American frontier, ‘where the climate is mild, and the soil new and fruitful, capable of making ample returns for the labours of the husbandman.’”⁶³ Shortly after Kaufman’s death, Leeser noted that in “the immense State of Texas,” while “many Jews live scattered here and there, there is but one incipient congregation.”⁶⁴

In addition to being fully aware of Jews in the “immense State of Texas,” Leeser’s paper reported on Jewish political figures of the era, including Mordecai Manuel Noah of New York, Senator Benjamin from Louisiana, Representative Phillip Phillips from Alabama, and representative Emanuel B. Hart of New York. All were well-known Jewish political leaders, and three were members of Congress before the Civil War. But the *Occident* never mentions Kaufman. If the first Congressman from Texas had been Jewish, it seems likely that Leeser would have noted this, either during Kaufman’s life or at his death.⁶⁵ But the Christian David S. Kaufman never shows up in Leeser’s newspaper.

It is always hard to prove the negative, but in the brilliant analysis of the immortal (although fictional) Sherlock Holmes, this seems to be a wonderful example of a dog that did not bark.⁶⁶ Leeser never wrote about

63 Bryan Edward Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 40, quoting Isaac Leeser, “The Prospect,” *Occident* 4 (September 1846): 271. Also useful is Bryan Edward Stone, “West of Center: Jews on the Real and Imagined Frontiers of Texas” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2003).

64 Bryan Edward Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 40, quoting Isaac Leeser, “The Importance of Missions,” *Occident* 11 (May 1853): 85–86.

65 I am indebted to Joe Weber of the AJA for checking the index card file of the *Occident* to confirm this.

66 Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” (first published in *The Strand Magazine*, 1892).

Kaufman because he knew that Kaufman was not Jewish. Leeser was based in Philadelphia. He would have known of the many Christians, especially Amish and Mennonites, named Kaufman. He might even have known of the reasonably prominent Abraham Kaufman family in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. He certainly would have known of any Jews from that county. Had Leeser suspected that Representative Kaufman—who was originally from Cumberland County—was Jewish, he doubtless would have investigated him and learned that his older brother was a minister, that his mother was named Mary Spangler, and that his grandmother's first name was Christianna. Leeser would have correctly concluded that David Kaufman was not Jewish.

Two men who are known to have been Jewish or of Jewish ancestry were contemporaries of Kaufman in Texas: Adolphus Sterne (1801–1852) and Jacob de Cordova (1808–1868). Sterne was born in Germany to a Jewish father and a Lutheran mother and eventually converted to Catholicism, the faith of his wife, although privately he may have been a deist. He fled Germany when he was sixteen to avoid military service and ended up in New Orleans. He was certainly ethnically Jewish. He could read and write Hebrew and “received a Jewish upbringing.” His father migrated to New Orleans where he was “a founding member of the Israelite Congregation of Shanarei-Chasset.” In his diary, Sterne mentioned his Jewish friends in Texas and elsewhere. Despite the absolutist assertions of some scholars that he was “clearly not Jewish,” Sterne was in fact ethnically and culturally Jewish, perceived as being Jewish by practicing Jews in Texas, and concerned about Jews in his adopted homeland, even if he was not technically Jewish under halakhah. But it is also possible that Sterne's observant father arranged to have his son converted as a young child while they lived in Germany. Sterne knew Kaufman and mentioned him a number of times in his diary, but there is no evidence he considered Kaufman to be Jewish or in any way a landsman.⁶⁷ It seems highly probable that, if Sterne thought Kaufman

67 Bryan Edward Stone, *Chosen Folks*, 34–37; Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier,” 23–24; Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, 21–22, 64 and Archie P. McDonald, “Sterne, Nicholas Adolphus (1801–1852),” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/sterne-nicholas-adolphus> (accessed 15 July 2024).

was Jewish, he would have mentioned it. This is one more example of evidence that Kaufman was not even remotely Jewish because “the dog did not bark.”

De Cordova was halakhically Jewish, the son of a Jewish mother and a Jewish father. He does not appear to have had much interest in organized religion. There is no evidence that he ever formally left Judaism or converted to any other faith. That would mean, under Jewish law, that he was Jewish from birth until his death. De Cordova spoke many languages, including Hebrew. While he married a non-Jewish woman, we have no evidence that he ever formally left Judaism, so it is reasonable to conclude that he remained Jewish his entire life. De Cordova, an early settler in Texas, came from a well-documented Jewish family that migrated to the United States from Jamaica. His father, a Jewish Jamaican coffee grower, moved to Philadelphia, where he became the *parnas* (president) of Congregation Mikveh Israel. His half-brother Phineas was a founding member of the first synagogue in Austin. Jacob moved to Texas in 1839, served in the Texas state legislature, was the founder of the city of Waco, and in 1849 published the first official map of Texas. At one point he owned a million acres of land in the state. There is no evidence from de Cordova’s papers that he thought Kaufman was Jewish, even while de Cordova was connected to the emerging Jewish presence in Texas.⁶⁸ Once again, we find no barking dog that connects Kaufman to Jews or anything Jewish.

Politician and Advocate of Christianity

Kaufman’s years as a public figure in Texas and national politics, as well as the eulogy in Congress after his death, underscore his Christian background. On 27 December 1840, Kaufman, then a leader in the

68 Bryan Edward Stone, “On the Frontier,” 24–25; Ornish, “De Cordova”; Carolyn Hyman, “De Cordova, Phineas (1819–1903),” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/de-cordova-phineas> (accessed 15 July 2024); “J. De Cordova’s Map of the State of Texas,” Bullock Museum, <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/artifacts/cordova-map-state-of-texas> (accessed 15 July 2020); Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, 21–22, 54–61; and James M. Day, *Jacob de Cordova: Land Merchant of Texas* (Waco: Heritage Society of Waco, 1962).

Congress of the Texas Republic, gave an address for the Austin Masonic Lodge for the feast of St. John the Evangelist. The next day, three Texas political leaders, including Sam Houston and Anson Jones (who would later serve as president of the Republic of Texas), asked Kaufman for a copy of his speech, which was soon published in the *Austin City Gazette*. In his speech Kaufman noted this was “the birth-day of the beloved disciple of the Prince of Peace, and an honored festival in the Masonic Calendar!” He said that speaking to this “Christian audience” was “gratifying assurance that the memory of the Evangelist is nurtured.” Even though Texas was still an independent republic, he expressed his veneration for George Washington and the “Star-spangled [*sic*] Banner.” He gloried that the Texas Revolution had led to “the complete overthrow of the enemies of the Anglo-Saxon race!”—by which he meant Roman Catholic Mexico—and also condemned the “savage Comanche.” He praised the laws of the new Texas government, which he claimed “now ascend to the living God.” Combining Masonic ideas, politics, White supremacy, and Christian faith, he noted that “Saint John the Evangelist and Saint John the Baptist challenge our peculiar admiration.” At this Masonic festival, he declared that “Masonry, like Christianity, though humble in its origin, and born as it were in a manger, has attained a lofty and elevated stand, and now numbers among its disciples many of the powerful on the earth.” He urged his audience to support Masonry: “Christians! Encourage it, for it is a beautiful handmaid of Religion!” He ended by hoping the audience would “catch a new inspiration from... the sanctity of the day, the invocation of Divine Grace.”⁶⁹

Kaufman deftly tied together Protestant Christianity, American patriotism, racism, and White supremacy in his public presentations. It is small wonder that in 1846 the proslavery overwhelmingly Protestant citizens of Texas elected Kaufman to represent their state in the nation they had just joined. In Congress, Kaufman was famously proslavery. That, of course, would not have precluded him from being Jewish. After all, Senators Yulee and Benjamin were aggressively proslavery, and both would serve the Confederacy. Senator Benjamin F. Wade (another

69 David S. Kaufman, “Address,” *Austin City Gazette*, 13 January 1841, 1–2.

Christian with a “Jewish” first name) correctly labeled Senator Benjamin an “Israelite with Egyptian principles.”⁷⁰ The comment was sarcastic and somewhat antisemitic, but also true. Had any of the antislavery members of the House of Representatives from 1846 to 1851, such as Joshua Giddings, Solomon Foot, or Amos Tuck, thought Kaufman was Jewish, they might have made similar comments. But no one did because no one thought he was Jewish.

In 1850, Kaufman gave a commencement address at Princeton, his alma mater. By now he was a famous and successful alumnus and a rising star in the Democratic Party. He was in his third term in Congress and on his way to what everyone assumed would be a long and successful political career. Kaufman’s Princeton speech was typical of many commencement addresses, urging the new graduates to go forward and do great things and warning them of the pitfalls of life. He praised the American democracy, where “no unbridled majority tramples on the rights of the minority” and there is “no adulterous union between Church and State—no test oaths as passports to civil and religious stations—and no fealty or allegiance but to God and the Constitution.” He declared that the Constitution is “inferior only in wisdom to the laws of God or the teachings of our holy Saviour.”⁷¹ Clearly, for Representative Kaufman, God was part of the Christian Trinity, along with the “holy Saviour.”

Throughout the address he wove four themes: his patriotism and glorification of the United States, his Christian faith, his support for slavery, and his support for White supremacy. Sometimes they merged. He bragged that parts of the continent that were “the home of the savage” in 1776 were “now fourteen sovereign States.” He praised the United States Constitution that allowed inventions to be patented in part because it “led Whitney to invent the cotton-gin which enriches the south, gives profitable employment to the north, feeds the operatives

70 Paul Finkelman, “An Israelite with Egyptian Principles,” *Jewish Review of Books* (Winter 2022): 22–23.

71 David S. Kaufman, *Address Delivered before the American Whig and Clisosophic Societies of the College of New Jersey, June 7th 1850* (Princeton: John T. Robinson, 1850), 9.

of Europe and provides cheap clothing for the whole civilized world!”⁷² Well before Senator James Henry Hammond declared that “Cotton is King,” Kaufman had made the same argument.⁷³ He explained that he was “a northern man by birth and a southern man by adoption.” He asserted, with no apologies, that “Slavery is not a spot upon the sun of our union” but something “planted” in the United States “by the permission of a just and overruling Providence.” He praised slavery for bringing the “degraded sons of Ham the benefits of civilization and Christianity.”⁷⁴ He praised the creation of Liberia where “Christianity is taught, and civilization is supplanting the reign of barbarism.” He declared that anyone who opposed slavery was “a Judas who would betray his Saviour.”⁷⁵ He ended by denouncing calls for women’s suffrage, “Agrarianism, Communism, Fourierism, and Socialism.” He argued that, for the supporters of these reform movements and proponents of the abolition of slavery, “the Bible is to be pronounced a cheat; Christ to be pronounced an imposter; Paul to be denounced as a hypocrite; the Sabbath is to be abolished” and “property declared theft.”⁷⁶

Kaufman’s address was filled with classical references, Latin phrases, and praise for both the North and the South, but his theme was clear: the Constitution, slavery, and White supremacy went hand-in-hand with Christianity. The address was a classic example of proslavery arguments wrapped in Christianity with several references to “our Saviour.” No one who reads this speech could possibly imagine that Kaufman was anything but a devout Christian. Had Rabbi Cohen read the speech, which was available as a published pamphlet, it is impossible to imagine he would have thought Kaufman was Jewish.⁷⁷

72 Kaufman, *Address*, 10, 11.

73 James Henry Hammond, *The Mudsill, or Cotton is King Speech*, 1858, reprinted in Paul Finkelman, *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford, 2020), 78.

74 This was a common Protestant biblical interpretation to explain racial difference and defend slavery; see Thornton Stringfellow, *The Bible Argument; Or, Slavery in the Light of Divine Revelation* (1860), reprinted in Finkelman, *Defending Slavery*, 127.

75 Kaufman, *Address*, 16–17, 19–20.

76 *Ibid.*, 27–28.

77 David S. Kaufman, *Address Delivered before the American Whig and Clisosophic Societies*, 9.

Kaufman died unexpectedly on 31 January 1851. The House held services for him. In his eulogy, the chaplain of the House, Reverend R. R. Gurley, mentioned “Christian revelation,” “Jesus Christ,” “our Saviour,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” and “Him” and ended with the following statement: “God grant this to each and every one of us, for Christ’s sake. Amen.”⁷⁸ It is not surprising, perhaps, that a Christian minister would use such language, but by this time there were Jews in the House who surely would have spoken to the chaplain about the appropriate language of the eulogy for a fellow Jew. But no one in Congress believed that David Spangler Kaufman, the grandson of a Mennonite bishop and the brother of an Episcopal priest, was Jewish.

Conclusion

Sorting out mid-nineteenth century American Jewish history is not easy. For more than a century, scholars have relied on the work of Simon Wolf to identify Jews who fought in American wars from the Revolution to the end of the Civil War.⁷⁹ Wolf identified “Davis S. Kauffman” [*sic*] as a Jewish soldier serving in the Mexican War, “at the battle of Neches,” and later “a member of Congress.”⁸⁰ David S. Kaufman was a soldier at the Battle of Neches, but it took place in 1839, seven years before the Mexican War began. For our purposes, the exact circumstances of Kaufman’s military service are less important than Wolf’s assertion that he was Jewish. Writing in 1895, Wolf had no documentation of Kaufman’s ethnicity or faith and no connection to anyone who knew him. His source was almost certainly Rabbi Cohen, who also called him “Davis S. Kauffman,” misspelling both his first and his last name.

Wolf published his compilation of Jews who served in the military a year after Cohen published his first article on Jews in Texas.⁸¹ In 1894,

78 *Obituary Services, on the Death of Hon. David S. Kaufman*, 13–16.

79 Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company, 1895). Available at The Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/47135/47135-h/47135-h.htm>

80 Wolf, *American Jew*, 74.

81 Henry Cohen, “Settlement of the Jews in Texas,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 2 (1894): 139–156.

both men presented papers at a conference at the Arlington Hotel, across the river from Washington, DC.⁸² It seems likely the two men knew each other and were aware of their parallel projects. Most of Wolf's papers were lost or destroyed, and the Cohen papers have no record of correspondence between the two men. But the fact that both men assumed Kaufman was Jewish, as well as the fact that both called him "Davis Kauffman" instead of David Kaufman, suggests that they were in contact. It seems most likely that once Cohen, the leading rabbi in Texas, anointed Kaufman as being Jewish, Wolf followed his lead.⁸³

The Shapell Manuscript Foundation project has been reexamining all the allegedly Jewish soldiers in the Civil War, demonstrating that a significant number of Civil War "Jews" in Wolf's volume were not actually Jewish. "Within the first year of the project, it became very clear that more than just a few of the soldiers in the book were not Jewish."⁸⁴ Wolf's project was huge, and he certainly did the best job he could. But his designation of "Davis" Kaufman as a Jew fighting in Texas was incorrect, not only with regard to his actual name and what war he was in, but also in regard to his "Jewish" faith. Why was Wolf wrong? In part, he did not have access to full information and like Rabbi Cohen,

82 The conference was well publicized throughout the United States, including Houston, Texas; see "The Houston Daily Post (Houston, Tex.), Vol. NINTH YEAR, No. 326, Ed. 1, Monday, February 26, 1894," Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph82839/> (accessed 15 July 2024).

83 The Shapell Manuscript Foundation explains Wolf's methodology as the best anyone can. While the research team for Wolf has added over 1500 names to Wolf's compilation, his effort at the time involved deep research into military records, pensions, and Jewish archives of various sorts.

84 Adrienne DeArmas, "Appendix 1: The Genesis of the Shapell Roster," in Adam Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War* (New York: NYU Press, 2022), 229–232. Another example of this is Abraham Greenawalt (1834–27 October 1922), who was long considered a Jewish Civil War soldier who won the Medal of Honor during the war. But current scholarship has shown this to be inaccurate. On 4 April 2021, The National Museum of American Jewish Military History declared that it "does not recognize Abraham Green[a]walt as Jewish." His family was Evangelical Lutheran, and in 1919, his son asserted that he was a member of a Methodist church; see "Abraham Greenawalt—Medal of Honor Recipient," Jewish American Military History Articles, 4 April 2021, <https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/abraham-greenawalt---medal-of-honor-recipient> (accessed 10 April 2024).

he was misled by Kaufman's name. He was also misled by Cohen, who seemed to be an expert on Jews in Texas and published his article on Jews in Texas a year before Wolf published his book. Both men may also have had an over-zealous desire to find another Jewish leader in the development of the United States (for Wolf) and of Texas (for Cohen).

It is time to put this myth to rest.

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Head Quarters Jewish Union Republican Association,

New York, Pennsylvania and Indiana,

1864.

TO OUR JEWISH BRETHREN :

Owing to our peculiar tenets and opinions, we, the Jews of America, have ever been and are still a united body in all matters wherein our religious and social interests are concerned; but in the political affairs of our adopted country very few members of our persuasion have hitherto been led to take an active part. The reasons for this, which apply equally to other classes not professionally political, are self-evident and do not require enumeration here.

Nearly four years of desperate and bloody war with our misguided fellow-countrymen of the South have, however, changed the face of all things, and the crisis is approaching when it becomes imperative upon every honest-minded responsible Jew as well as Gentile, in the interests of humanity, patriotism and the preservation of the National existence, to well and impartially weigh the respective merits of the two candidates for the Supreme Executive Power in the American Republic,—the grandest in the world's history,—but which, if allowed to remain divided against itself, must inevitably follow the fate of its fore-runners in Rome and Greece, and end in shame and ruin, to the satisfaction and profit of the despotisms and aristocracies of Europe.

The spirits of innumerable martyrs to the cause of liberty are watching anxiously for the end of this great struggle, and the noble hearts of thousands of brave devoted patriots are pulsating hopefully in unison with the Union-loving North. Every Federal victory, every step toward the annihilation of the rebellion, is one more guarantee of the final triumph and prevalence of republican self-government throughout the universe.

One more effort, strong, united and determined, and the Champion of Freedom, the Emancipator of the Slave and preserver of his country will be re-elected to the power he has so wisely and justly wielded during four years of civil war and political disorganization. We call earnestly upon our Jewish brethren to bring heart and soul, influence and wealth to this great movement, without the success of which, the American republic, the country's national greatness and unparalleled prosperity must sink into wreck and ruin.

Unity is strength—Combine strongly, act energetically and unitedly, and the votes of the immense number of Jewish citizens will go far to determine the re-election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in November next, in other words, the salvation of the republic.

Not only has the Military Career of General McClellan been a failure and therein strengthened the rebellion, but in none of his political acts or manifestoes has he given evidence of the exalted and unswerving patriotism and statesmanship required of the President of this republic in the present terrible crisis, and which Abraham Lincoln, despite the slurs and slanders of his political enemies, has constantly displayed in so high a degree during the term of his administration.

Has Mr. Lincoln executed the trust confided on him by the American people? Look at the map of the United States and you will find that the soil now held by the rebels in arms is but a speck, in contrast with the area of territory overrun by them in 1861.

Making due allowance for all disadvantages, inexperience and obstacles, never in the history of the world has so numerous and formidable a force, led by skilful generals, and animated by the false enthusiasm of accomplished demagogues, and stimulated by the moral and material aid of European sympathisers, been more speedily and completely reduced to almost subjection than the rebellious Confederacy under Jeff. Davis has been defeated and driven to the last extremity by the patriotic and Union-loving armies of the North, under the wise and determined administration of Mr. Lincoln.

Let us act wisely. Should the nominee of the Chicago Convention be elected, disintegration will follow, and two nations occupy that land over all of which once waved the glorious stars and stripes. With the division of the republic, there will come, as sure as night follows the day, utter financial ruin, discord and anarchy.

On the other hand, should Abraham Lincoln again be elected President, the high hopes of liberty will be realized. The country desires peace, not a peace destructive to its interests and dishonorable to the nation, but a peace which shall maintain the Constitution and the Union in all its integrity. Abraham Lincoln will submit to none other. With his re-election the olive branch of peace will soon wave over the land, the finances of the country will be restored, harmony and prosperity will prevail, and the nation will again move on in its career of greatness and grandeur.

Lincoln and Union! McClellan and Disunion!
"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

ELIJAH MIERS, N. Y.
H. ALEXANDER, N. Y.
JOHN WOLF, N. Y.
S. MYERS, N. Y.
B. DAVIS, N. Y.
REV. E. MIERS, Ill.
H. DEBOOR, Penn.

ISAAC HYNEMAN, Phila.
HERMAN VON BEIL, Penn.
REV. JULIUS SALINGER, Penn.
LEON HIRSH, Pa.
WM. LONESTATTER, Pa.
WM. EPSTEIN, Pittsburgh.
CHAS. ARNSTAHL, "

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Jews, Lincoln, and the American Election of 1864: A Newly Discovered Broadside and Its Larger Significance

JONATHAN D. SARNA

According to most studies of Jews and American politics, the subject of this article—an 1864 political broadside urging Jews to vote for Abraham Lincoln—should simply not exist. Rev. Samuel Isaacs, a mid-nineteenth-century American Jewish Orthodox religious leader from Holland, regularly insisted that “Israelites, as Israelites, have no politics.”¹ The eminent Reform rabbi, Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago, writing in the authoritative *Encyclopedia Britannica*, agreed: “Politically the Jews are divided,” he wrote. “There is no solid Jewish vote. Most of the Jews have no political aspirations. They are loyal citizens.” The presumed link between loyalty and the absence of political aspirations is telling.²

In our time, the judicious American Jewish historian Naomi W. Cohen, in her descriptive scholarly work on nineteenth-century German Jews in America, concluded that from before the Civil War until the early twentieth century the basic rule was that “politics concerned the individual Jew but not the community. Jewish group interests, if indeed there were any,” she wrote, “had no place under that name in any political forum.” “More than other immigrant groups,” she boldly continued, “nineteenth-century American Jews shied *away* from injecting ethnic

1 *Jewish Messenger* (25 January 1861): 28; for similar statements by Isaacs, see Robert Swierenga, *The Forerunners: Dutch Jewry in the North American Diaspora* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 85.

2 Emil G. Hirsch, “Judaism and the Jews in the United States,” *New American Supplement to the Werner Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Akron: Werner, 1901 [1897]), 27:467.

interests into the political arena.” Indeed, two central principles of nineteenth-century American Jewish political life, according to Cohen’s influential account, were the following: first, “it was wrong for Jews to band together in separate political clubs” and, second, “rabbis or lay leaders had no right to advise the community on how to vote.”³

Plainly, the 1864 broadside violated all these rules. So far as I know, it is the earliest American Jewish political broadside in existence. The original is found in the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.⁴ Benjamin Shapell and I did not discuss or reproduce it in *Lincoln and the Jews: A History* (2015), because we did not then know it existed. But the broadside reinforces what we did know and discuss: that Jews were much more engaged in promoting Abraham Lincoln’s 1864 reelection than the extant literature, both prescriptive and descriptive, previously led us to believe.⁵ Historians have been misled by the abundant prescriptive literature warning Jews against the evils of group politics. When one looks at what Jews actually *did* rather than at what they reflexively *said*, one discovers that many leaders paid lip service to the rule of “Jews have no politics” in public but failed to obey that rule in private.⁶

That is what happened in 1864, amidst the Civil War, when Lincoln ran for re-election. By then, the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued freeing the slaves, but as the war dragged on Lincoln’s popularity plummeted. “It seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will

3 Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 129–130; see generally 129–158.

4 “Head Quarters Jewish Union Republican Association, New York, Pennsylvania and Indiana, To Our Jewish Brethren (n.p., 1864), in “John A. McAllister’s Civil War: The American Home Front,” Library Company of Philadelphia, <https://www.librarycompany.org/mcallisterexhibition/section5.htm> (image #9).

5 Jonathan D. Sarna and Benjamin Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews: A History* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books and St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 178–182.

6 David G. Dalin makes this point concerning Louis Marshall; see Dalin, “Louis Marshall, the Jewish Vote and the Republican Party,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 4 (Spring 1992), reprinted in Dalin, *Jews and American Public Life: Essays on American Jewish History and Politics* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2022), 97–127.

not be re-elected,” Lincoln wrote in a famous memorandum.⁷ Hoping to keep his job, he made a special effort to reach out to potential supporters. Outreach to Jews formed part of that political strategy.

Lincoln and the Jews revealed that, as early as December of 1858, “Israelites” were explicitly included as part of the coalition of outsiders whose votes Lincoln and the new Republican Party sought to attract. America’s Jewish population was by then approaching 150,000 and Lincoln himself had Jewish friends, including his influential advisor, Abraham Jonas. In 1860, the majority of Jews, fearing instability, war, and loss of business, nevertheless voted against Lincoln. Some German-Jewish radicals (notably veterans of the abortive 1848 revolutions) and others, supported him.⁸

In 1864, when the broadside reproduced here appeared, the Republicans—Lincoln’s party of Union—made a renewed effort to attract Jewish voters. Lincoln’s friend, the Jewish chiropodist (podiatrist) Issachar Zacharie, led this remarkable campaign. Zacharie spent a great deal of time during the Civil War helping Jews who had run afoul of the authorities and intervening with Lincoln to free (*pidyon shevuyim*) Jews who had been taken prisoner in the North for smuggling or related crimes.⁹

Partly out of gratitude for Lincoln’s benevolent pardons, Zacharie now took charge of an effort to win Jewish voters to the Republican side. He visited key states, knocked on doors, secured favors for selected Jewish voters, and exhorted the faithful to turn out at the ballot box. On 23 October 1864, probably at Zacharie’s behest, Lincoln met with “certain gentlemen of the Hebrew faith” to discuss the Jewish vote, likely the first time that any president had ever formally discussed that subject in the executive mansion. Rumors circulated that these “gentlemen of the Hebrew faith” had offered to deliver the New York Jewish vote to Lincoln in return for suitable contributions. That, of course, was

7 Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 7:514; Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 2:704–710.

8 Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, 43–64.

9 Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, 142–145.

quickly denied. Lincoln's young assistant, John Hay—many years later he became Secretary of State—insisted that “no pledge of the Jewish vote was made by these gentlemen and no inducements or promises were extended to them by the President.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, a private letter from a wealthy New York Jew named Samuel A. Lewis advised Lincoln to direct any “Jewish committees” seeking political funds straight to him: “I will furnish them such amounts as we see can be used to advantage...nothing shall be wanting on the part of your friends here toward carrying the Union [Republican] cause.”¹¹ Lewis was particularly grateful to Lincoln and Zacharie for freeing a relative of his from a Union prison. Whether Lincoln took Lewis up on this generous offer of funds is unknown, but his letter demonstrates that Jews in 1864 were much more deeply engaged, as Jews, in getting fellow Jews to vote for Lincoln than contemporaries were willing to admit or scholars subsequently to recognize.

The Jewish Union Republican Association broadside discussed here seems to have been another part of Lincoln's ethno-religious strategy. Its fourteen signers, almost all from New York and Pennsylvania, described America as their “adopted country,” an indication that they were, at least for the most part, immigrants. The bulk of those identified, like so many Jews of that time, were born in central Europe, a disproportionate number from Holland. By 1864, most were middle aged and had prospered. Pennsylvanians (all but one from Philadelphia) dominated the group. Several of them worked together on Jewish charitable and educational endeavors, even though religiously they spanned from Radical Reform to Orthodox. Seven of the eight Pennsylvanians identified themselves on the broadside with their full names, which may indicate that the document originated there. By contrast, three of the five New Yorkers (H. Alexander, S. Myers, and R. Davis) hid behind first initials. Curiously, the “Jewish Union Republican Association,” in the second line of the

10 Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, 180; *Jewish Messenger* (28 October 1864), 124; John Hay to Myer S. Isaacs, 1 November 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

11 Samuel A. Lewis to Abraham Lincoln, 26 October 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

broadside, listed Indiana as one of its headquarters, although no Indiana Jew signed this statement at all. In fact, Judith E. Endelman argues that it was only in the post-Civil War era that Indiana Jews “began to take an active part in...politics.”¹²

The following signers can be positively identified, and they are here listed in the order in which their names appeared at the bottom of the broadside.

Elijah Miers (1841–1907) was born in New York according to the 1900 census and served as a broker. The *New York Times* described him in 1883 as “a broker in a small way and a peddler of precious stones.” “Rev. E. Miers” of Illinois, also listed as a signatory, may have been his (immigrant?) father. He was likely the same “Rev. Edward Miers of the Fifth Street congregation,” whom Isaac Leeser met in St. Louis in 1858.¹³

H. Deboor, a misspelling of Henry de Boer (1816–1907), was a Dutch-born old clothes dealer and later dry goods jobber, active in Bnai Israel (“the Netherlands Synagogue in Philadelphia”), where he served as president and choir leader. He also engaged in Jewish charitable and educational work and fathered fourteen children. De Boer and two other Dutch-born signers of the broadside, Isaac Hyneman and Herman Van Beil, held positions as officers of the Hebrew Benevolent Society in Philadelphia.¹⁴

Isaac Hyneman (1804–1886), scion of a prominent Dutch-Jewish family, resided in Philadelphia in 1864 and was active at Mikveh Israel. He had lived for some time in Richmond and was married to the sister of the merchant and Jewish communal leader Jacob Ezekiel, who at one point was his business partner. While many of the Ezekiels (including the subsequently famous sculptor Moses Ezekiel) were Confederates

12 Judith E. Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis 1849 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 27.

13 *New York Times* (22 February 1883), 8; *Occident* (1 April 1852), 55; “Elijah Miers,” Find a Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/130942393/elijah-miers>.

14 Swierenga, *Forerunners*, 130, 374 n 86, and index s.v. “de Boer, Henry”; Ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/82265618/person/102325385633/facts?_phsrc=IT128&_phstart=successSource]

and proud Virginians, Hyneman's son, Jacob Ezekiel Hyneman, fought for the Union. His father in this broadside publicly advocated for the election of Lincoln.¹⁵

Herman Von [should be Van] Beil (1799–1865), born in Amsterdam, arrived in Philadelphia in 1820 and was a secondhand clothes dealer and later a pawnbroker and prominent Freemason. He became a devoted follower of Rev. Leeser and followed him to Congregation Beth El Emeth when Leeser's supporters seceded from Mikveh Israel. Yet he clearly disagreed with Leeser concerning slavery and the Republican Party. While, as Lance Sussman has taught us, Leeser was sympathetic to the Confederacy and critical of Lincoln, Van Beil signed this Republican broadside and advocated for "Lincoln and Union!"¹⁶

Rev. Julius Salinger (1804–1865) of Germany was the reader (*chazan*) at Keneseth Israel (most recently, Sussman's congregation) where the Radical Reform rabbi and antislavery advocate David Einhorn then served as rabbi. Salinger's grandson and namesake, Dr. Julius L. Salinger (1866–1912) was given the middle name "Lincoln," an indication of the family's esteem for the by-then assassinated president.¹⁷

Leon Hirsh (1826–1903) was born in Hesse-Darmstadt and lived in Philadelphia and New York. His brothers, Henry, Mason, and Leopold Hirsh, likewise immigrated to the United States and made their fortunes in the umbrella business. All were active in Jewish communal affairs.¹⁸

William Lonestatter (1822–1894), commonly known by his German

15 Swierenga, *Forerunners*, 54, 121; "Isaac Hyneman (1804–1886)," Mikveh Israel History, <https://mikvehisraelhistory.com/2013/01/18/isaac-hyneman-1804-1886/>.

16 Swierenga, *Forerunners*, 124 and index s.v. "Van Beil, Herman"; *Israelite* (4 September 1857), 69; for Leeser's views on Lincoln, see Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 218–227.

17 Henry S. Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Levytype, 1894), 91; "Julius Salinger," Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/search/?name=Julius_Salinger&birth=1866&death=1912; Julius Lincoln Salinger and Frederick J. Kaltever, *Modern Medicine* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1900).

18 "Leon Hirsh," *Jewish Exponent* (22 May 1903): 3; *American Israelite* (17 March 1892): 2 (re Mason Hirsh); "Henry Hirsh," *Jewish Exponent* (10 October 1919): 10.

last name, “Lonnerstadter,” was a Philadelphia merchant and, in 1865, secretary of Keneseth Israel, where Einhorn was rabbi and Rev. Salinger *chazan*. He subsequently served as secretary of the board of Philadelphia’s United Hebrew Charities.¹⁹

Charles D. Arnstahl (1809–1887), born in Mecklenberg-Schwerin, immigrated to the United States in 1838 and was a founder of Congregation Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh. He worked in the tobacco and cigar business. He had a personal reason to support Lincoln in 1864: the president had appointed him as a revenue inspector in Pittsburgh.²⁰

Not one of these signers stood among the most prominent Jews of the time. None appeared in the circle of Lincoln’s friends, associates, supporters, acquaintances, and appointees that we listed in *Lincoln and the Jews*.²¹ That may have been no accident. The signers had less to lose by publicizing their support for Lincoln than more prominent Jews who quietly supported Lincoln in the 1864 election.

Those whose names publicly appeared on the Republican broadside admitted that their document was unusual. “In the political affairs of our adopted country,” they confessed, “very few members of our persuasion have hitherto been led to take an active part.” They boldly called upon Jews to support Lincoln—“the Champion of Freedom, the Emancipator of the Slave and preserver of his country”—and, fascinatingly, in violation of the commandments of proper Jewish political behavior, they proclaimed that “the votes of the immense number of Jewish citizens will go far to determine the re-election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency.”

In real life, the Jewish vote in 1864 could scarcely have exceeded fifty thousand nationwide, but that would certainly not be the last time that the power of the Jewish vote was exaggerated.²² The same bombastic

19 *Sinai* (3 February 1865): 127; *American Israelite* (29 March 1894): 2; *Jewish Exponent* (30 March 1894): 3.

20 *Jewish Exponent* (22 July 1887): 8.

21 Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, xiv–xv.

22 For Jewish population figures, see Jacob R. Marcus, *To Count A People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 237–240; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale

claim was made four years later by Jewish Democrats who, in a bid to prevent Ulysses S. Grant's election, warned the Republican standard-bearer that "we are numerous, we are influential, we are wealthy, we are diffused over the whole continent."²³ In the twentieth century, anti-Semites influenced by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* turned these exaggerations around, infamously accusing Jews of controlling the destinies of nations.

If the Jewish Union Republican Association's broadside exaggerated Jewish power, it greatly underestimated the Jewish community's specific indebtedness to Lincoln. The text was silent concerning what today we would consider to have been the three major reasons why Jews might have supported him: his many appointments of Jews to governmental and military offices, his pivotal support for opening up the military chaplaincy to Jews, and his countermanding of Gen. Grant's infamous order (known as General Orders #11) expelling "Jews as a Class" from the Army of the Tennessee's war zone.²⁴ What the broadside emphasized instead were themes common to Lincoln's Jewish and non-Jewish supporters alike: the president's emancipation of the slaves, his defense of the Constitution and the Union, and his "determined administration" of the military. "Choose ye this day whom you will serve," the broadside concluded. Echoing Joshua 24:15, it subtly linked the Democrats ("McClellan and Disunion") to the false gods that the ancient Israelites pledged to reject. Lincoln's re-election, it promised, would realize "the high hopes of liberty" and result in "peace," "harmony," "prosperity," "greatness" and "grandeur."

Myer Isaacs, the editor of the New York *Jewish Messenger*, secretary

University Press, 2019), 391–392. Women, children and nonnaturalized immigrants, among others, could not vote at that time.

23 Ph. Von Bort, *General Grant and the Jews* (New York: National News Company, 1868), 16; Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Schocken/Nextbook, 2012), 58–59.

24 Sarna and Shapell, *Lincoln and the Jews*, 77–118. The fact that Solomon Schechter overlooked these same themes in his 1909 lecture on the occasion of Lincoln's Hundredth Anniversary delivered at the Jewish Theological Seminary suggests that they were not generally known until later; see Solomon Schechter, *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers* (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1959), 145–168.

of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, and the son of Rev. Samuel Isaacs, one of the architects, as noted above, of the antipolitical stance of American Jews, was understandably aghast at the broadside's discussions of Jewish politics and the Jewish vote. "The Israelites are not as a body distinctively Union [meaning Republican] or Democratic in their politics," he insisted. "The Jews as a body have *no* politics!" Privately, however, he assured Lincoln that many Jews—himself included—warmly supported the Republican Party.²⁵

Jewish leaders like Myer Isaacs believed that politics needed to be conducted privately, not with public pronouncements and broadsides. Jewish politics to them was, like sexual relations, properly confined to the private sphere, behind closed doors. There it was permissible and natural, while in public they considered it shameful and dangerous.

Zacharie, the chiropodist and an ex-spy, had lots of experience working behind closed doors. In a confidential letter sent just five days prior to the election, he assured President Lincoln that the Jewish vote would swing his way. "As regards the Israelites," he wrote, "with but few Exceptions they will vote for you...I have secured good and trustworthy men to attend on them on Election Day. My men have been all the week seeing that their masses are properly Registered so that all will go right."²⁶

And right it went—although the Jewish vote hardly mattered in the end. Thanks to a string of last-minute Union military victories on the battlefield, as well as divisions within the Democratic Party and an effective Republican slogan ("Don't change horses in the middle of a stream"), Lincoln won reelection by 400,000 votes and carried all but three states.²⁷

Unrecognized at that time was the fact that the 1864 election witnessed unprecedented Jewish engagement in politics. Lincoln appreciated the potential voting power of Jews, political parties with the

25 Myer S. Isaacs to Abraham Lincoln, 26 October 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

26 Issachar Zacharie to Abraham Lincoln, 3 November 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

27 Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln* 2:681–730.

assistance of Jews reached out and specifically targeted Jewish voters, and members of the Jewish Union Republican Association actively participated in the political arena, as their 1864 broadside demonstrates. All of this set the stage for the explosive involvement of Jews four years later in the 1868 presidential election, and in practically every American presidential election thereafter.²⁸

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28 On Jewish involvement in the 1868 election, see Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, 50–79.

Leeser's Legacy, Library, and Letters: A Case Study in Reception History

ZEV ELEFF*

In May 1912, Cyrus Adler wrote to Mayer Sulzberger about the status of the “Leeser Library.” There was perhaps no more active American Jewish leader than Isaac Leeser during the balance of the nineteenth century. He was a synagogue preacher, newspaper editor, translator of major Jewish texts, and formative figure in the creation of more than a dozen Jewish organizations. With an indomitable passion that compensated for a dearth of political savvy, Leeser furthered the cause of Orthodox Judaism, championed religious tolerance for Jews in the United States, and made a case for American Jewry’s leading role on the international scene. He was also a local father figure; Adler and Sulzberger were raised in the Philadelphia Jewish community that Leeser had helped steward for almost four decades. Adler had studied in Leeser’s Hebrew Education Society school before he, like many Jewish children at that time, matriculated to Central High School in Philadelphia. At the time of their correspondence, Adler was president of Dropsie College, and Sulzberger was the so-described patriarch of the Philadelphia Jewish leadership after Leeser had died.¹ Sulzberger led a distinguished life, as someone

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1 David G. Dalin, “The Patriarch: The Life and Legacy of Mayer Sulzberger,” in *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America*, ed. Murray Friedman (Philadelphia: Balch Institute, 1993), 58–74.

who liked a “fine imported cigar, hobnobbing with fellow members of Philadelphia’s prestigious Union League, and browsing the shelves of his own exquisite fine library.”²

The Leeser Library was in the possession of the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia and had been, to some degree or another, ever since Leeser died in February 1868. According to Adler, the leaders of the Hebrew Education Society agreed that the library “has no usefulness in the present building of the Education Society,” meaning Touro Hall on Tenth and Carpenter in South Philadelphia. Adler recommended that the Leeser Library be transferred to Dropsie as a “sort of memorial.”³ Unstated was Adler’s fear that Leeser’s legacy was vanishing. Adler’s plan resonated with Sulzberger. The latter was perhaps the most outstanding bibliophile of Jewish books in the United States. He also worried that his teacher’s legacy would fade without a suitable testament to Leeser’s many accomplishments. It made sense to Sulzberger, then, that Leeser’s books would be better used as an instrument to signal his perpetual influence on American Jewish life.

Sulzberger was prescient. Leeser’s library and letters were key to the preservation of his historical legacy. In contrast, Leeser’s contemporaries such as Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and the philanthropist Rebecca Gratz have continuously remained relevant to American Jews because of the institutions they founded. Their letters and writings have filled in historical gaps, but there was never a time when these individuals were in danger of being forgotten. Wise was the outstanding architect of Reform Judaism in the United States, and his legacy remains firmly attached to the central institutions of Reform Judaism: the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1873, now the Union for Reform Judaism), Hebrew Union College (1875), and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1889).⁴ As one Wise biographer put it, “I knew

2 Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 7.

3 Cyrus Adler to Mayer Sulzberger, 6 May 1912, Box 4, Folder 6, ARC MS-25, Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (Hereafter, KCAJS).

4 On Wise as institution builder, see Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (Oxford: Littman Library, 1992), 246–273.

him in his own lengthened shadow in the organizations and institutions he had brought into being,” and only “later I came to know him in his own writings.”⁵ Similarly, Gratz established, among other things, the first Hebrew Sunday school and the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. American Jews have routinely credited her pioneering labors as the inspiration for modern-day work in the fields of Jewish education and Jewish women’s societies.⁶

By comparison, Leeser’s name has not remained as firmly secured to American Jewish institutions. In 1960, Maxwell Whiteman bemoaned the lack of attention paid to Leeser. He pointed out that the only scholarly article on Leeser was a conference paper delivered at a Reform rabbinical convention in 1918. The few remaining testaments to his achievements were a stained glass window (arranged by Sulzberger and other Leeser devotees) in the old board room of the Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia and a bronze plaque in the lobby of Dropsie College.⁷ Many of the organizations Leeser had formed on behalf of Orthodox Judaism were overshadowed by Reform counterparts or replaced by others furnished by Eastern European migrants at the turn of the twentieth century. Leeser’s many books and manuals are no longer the texts from which Jews learn about their traditions, recite their prayers, or chant the Bible.

It took many years to recover Leeser for the annals of America’s Jews. Better primary materials have reassured scholars of Leeser’s firm position as one of the formative figures in American Jewish history. In 1967, almost one hundred years after Leeser’s demise, Bertram Korn affirmed about the Philadelphia Jewish leader that “practically every form of Jewish activity which supports American Jewish life today was

5 James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), ix.

6 Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 239–256.

7 Maxwell Whiteman, “Isaac Leeser’s Letters,” *Jewish Exponent* (14 October 1960): 17; Whiteman, *A History of Philadelphia’s Albert Einstein Medical Center* (Philadelphia: Albert Einstein Medical Center, 1966), 58–59.

either established or envisaged by this one man.”⁸ Decades later, Lance Sussman, Leeser’s leading biographer, tabulated a long list of Leeser’s many “firsts” in American Jewish life:

Included among his firsts were the first volumes of sermons delivered and published by an American Jewish religious leader (1837–68); the first complete American translation of the Sephardic prayerbook (1837); the first Hebrew primer for children (1838); the first successful American Jewish magazine-newspaper, the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (1843–69); the first American Jewish publication society (1845); the first complete English translation of the Ashkenazic prayerbook (1848); the first Hebrew “high school” (1849); the first English translation of the entire Bible by an American Jew (1853); and the first American Jewish theological seminary—the short-lived Maimonides College (1867). He also served as a vice president of the first Jewish defense organization—the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859).⁹

What took so long for American Jews and their historians to take stock of Leeser’s legacy? No doubt, much of it had to do with the rise of Reform Judaism and the weakening of the Orthodox element that Leeser had championed during his prime. Leeser was simply not the forefather who best represented the religious attitudes of most American Jews. Sussman lamented that “Leeser remains an unsung hero in the history of Judaism in America,” and that “his name often goes unmentioned in standard cultural and religious history of the United States.”¹⁰ Sussman’s pathbreaking biography did much to ameliorate that condition, as did several works that appeared before his book was published in 1995. In the meantime, the near-erasure of Leeser was also due to the failure of the so-called Philadelphia Group and others to furnish a proper memorial to Leeser as well as the disappearance of the primary materials that could

8 Bertram Wallace Korn, “Isaac Leeser: Centennial Reflections,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 19 (November 1967): 133.

9 Lance J. Sussman, “Isaac Leeser and the Protestantization of American Judaism,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 38 (April 1986): 4.

10 Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 14.

ably testify to his unique impact on American Jewish life. My aim is to explicate this curious history of “legacies” and “letters.”¹¹ The rise, fall, and rise again of American Jewish interest in Leiser suggests something very important, as the historian Jason Lustig points out, about the relationship between collective memory and the cultural currency assigned to historical documents.¹² Leiser’s institutional legacy did not match that of Wise, it did not parallel George Washington’s stature for American history, nor did it compare to the importance of Oliver Cromwell in the pages of British history books. It was possible to write American Jewish history without Isaac Leiser. Therefore, his appearance in American Jewish historical writing was contingent on subsequent generations of American Jews deciding to make meaning of his life and letters.

Isaac Leiser’s Will and Library

Leiser died on 1 February 1868. The first item in his will called on his student, Sulzberger, then just twenty-six years old, to assume responsibilities for Leiser’s monthly newspaper. The request was not at all unexpected. After all, it was Sulzberger who had drafted Leiser’s will just five months prior. Moreover, Leiser had assigned Sulzberger and William Hackenburg, another Leiser devotee, as executors of his estate. Both felt duty bound to fulfill the wishes of their mentor, to make sure that Jewish culture in Philadelphia would not “decline.”¹³

For twenty-five years, Leiser had shared his views on American Judaism in the pages of the *Occident*. Through it, Leiser set the standard on how Jews debated religion in the United States.¹⁴ Owing to

11 For a portrait of the Philadelphia Group, see Leah Levitz Fishbane, “Common Bonds: A Collective Portrait,” in *Jewish Renaissance and Revival in America*, ed. Eitan P. Fishbane and Jonathan D. Sarna (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 13–45.

12 Jason Lustig, *A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 4–19.

13 “Philadelphia,” *Occident* 25 (March 1868): 625. See also Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Making of an American Jewish Culture,” in *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America*, ed. Murray Friedman (Philadelphia: Balch Institute, 1993), 147.

14 Shari Rabin, “People of the Press: The *Occident*, the *Israelite*, and the Origins of American Judaism,” in *By Dawn’s Early Light: Jewish Contributions to American Culture from the Nation’s Founding to the Civil War*, ed. Adam Mendelsohn (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 2016), 75–82.

this, Sulzberger dutifully honored his teacher's request. "The desire of Mr. Leeser that we should make the attempt," recalled Sulzberger a year after he assumed the editorial role, "had been so strong that we could not refuse, and the *Occident* appeared."¹⁵ In keeping with Leeser's vision for American Judaism, Sulzberger published articles on the dangers of Reform Judaism, the value of Jewish education and the synagogue, and the importance of maintaining religious freedoms in Protestant America. The young Sulzberger also published news items, some about Leeser. He covered Leeser's funeral and printed resolutions passed by a number of American Jewish organizations—the Board of Delegates of the American Israelites, B'nai B'rith fraternity lodges, and the Jewish Hospital Association, as well as synagogues from Tennessee to Curaçao—that mourned Leeser's demise.

It was a posthumous opportunity to provide Leeser with the accolades that he had struggled to obtain during his lifetime. Sulzberger remembered how Wise and other religious leaders publicly downplayed Leeser's scholarship; he recalled how Mikveh Israel, Leeser's congregation, pushed him out of the pulpit and hurled unfounded rumors of Leeser's misdeeds; and, from a personal point of view, Sulzberger was aware that Leeser became disfigured after a bad bout with smallpox, a primary reason he never married and had children, despite his eagerness to start a family.¹⁶ Notwithstanding all this, Leeser was undeterred and Sulzberger wished for American Jews to remember him as a major figure in American Jewish life.

Sulzberger planned to write a lengthy biographical essay in the newspaper. He wrote to Leeser's cousins in Lübbecke, in the North Rhine-Westphalia region, for information on Leeser's early life in Europe and received a detailed report about Jewish life in the area.¹⁷ Leeser had anticipated that Sulzberger might wish to write about him. He left instructions to Deliah Cozens, a seamstress who had leased a room to Leeser and handled the business affairs of his newspaper, to transfer to

15 "Valedictory," *Occident* 26 (March 1869): 529.

16 Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, 75–76.

17 H. Leeser to Mayer Sulzberger, 1 August 1868, Box 4, Folder 1, ARC MS-25, KCAJS.

Sulzberger some materials “presuming that it might prove valuable.”¹⁸ Sulzberger was eager to furnish a learned memorial for his teacher. However, he carried too many burdens to produce a worthy biography. He was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1865 and worked as a lawyer in Moses Dropsie’s firm. Sulzberger aspired to open his own law practice, which he did in 1876.¹⁹ Sulzberger, unable or unwilling to delay his own professional aspirations, had to shut down the newspaper after a year of labor and editorship. He remained devoted to perpetuating Leeser’s legacy and retained board positions on several organizations that Leeser had established. It took Sulzberger five years before he found ample time to translate and publish the Lübbecke letter, by then in the pages of a Jewish newspaper in New York.²⁰

The second item in Leeser’s last will and testament also relates to the procurement of his legacy. His instructions were memorialized in the protocols of the Board of Delegates of the American Israelites, one of the many organizations that Leeser had helped found. The minutes of the Board of Delegates record: “I give and bequeath to the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia for the use of the library of the college established by them all the books and pamphlets, of my private library.”²¹

Maimonides College was a major milestone for Leeser. He had spilled much ink on the need for increased rabbinic authority and rabbinical training in the United States. Leeser agonized about, in his view anyway, lay-led synagogues and reform-minded rabbis who stymied the well-intentioned efforts of traditionally trained Jewish ministers to create religious stability for all American Jews.²² Accordingly, four months before he passed away, Leeser realized his “most cherished dream, an

18 Ellen Cozens to Mayer Sulzberger, 3 May 1868, Box 4, Folder 1, ARC MS-25, KCAJS.

19 Dalin, “Patriarch,” 60.

20 “Rev. Isaac Leeser,” *Jewish Messenger* (29 August 1873): 5.

21 Records of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, 9 March 1868, Box 1, Folder 6, P-20, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

22 Zev Eleff, *Who Rules the Synagogue: Religious Authority and the Formation of American Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 37–43.

American Jewish theological seminary.”²³ Maimonides College opened in Philadelphia with eight students and a faculty roster of well-trained local rabbis such as Sabato Morais and Marcus Jastrow. The Leeser Library was meant to ensure that the school outlived him. Some reports indicated that Leeser’s library totaled more than eight hundred volumes while others estimated that it contained about two thousand items.²⁴ All agreed, however, that the Leeser Library held the largest collection of published work on American Judaica, scores of pamphlets and books that testified to the richness of American Jewish life during the Early Republic. They shared this view even though no one had taken the time to review the contents of the collection.²⁵ It was also the consensus that the Leeser Library remained woefully underutilized. Ultimately, Leeser’s demise derailed Maimonides College’s momentum.

At least the Leeser Library was salvageable. The collection never relocated to Maimonides College, which folded after six challenging years. Constant instability wreaked havoc on all kinds of planning. Spared from the turmoil, the Leeser Library stayed in the basement of the Hebrew Education Society.²⁶

The circumstances deeply distressed Sulzberger. To remedy the situation, he arranged to move the Leeser Library to his personal residence. He loaned the collection to the upstart Young Men’s Hebrew Association, but observers noticed that the Leeser Library “does not suffer from over-use” there.²⁷ Yet, unsatisfied with the maintenance of the uncatalogued library, Sulzberger moved the books back to the Hebrew Education Society. He commissioned Adler, his cousin, who was then twenty, to conduct an audit of Leeser’s books, but by Adler’s admission, it had a “good many errors.”²⁸

23 Betram Wallace Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954), 152.

24 For the largest estimate, see “Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia,” *American Hebrew* (14 March 1884): 74.

25 “Maimonides College,” *Jewish Messenger* (7 August 1868): 3.

26 Korn, *Eventful Years*, 182–185.

27 Observer, “Philadelphia Letter,” *American Israelite* (25 May 1877): 6.

28 Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), 20–21.

Adler's research confirmed what most had already presumed about Leeser's literary holdings. His library was filled with Bibles and translations of Scripture. He had acquired essential rabbinic tracts and amassed a considerable number of works on Jewish philosophy, mostly in Hebrew and German. Leeser held an interest in the history of other religions and made sure to purchase the volumes produced by his American Jewish contemporaries, no matter whether he considered them a friend (Morris Raphall) or a foe (Wise).²⁹

What else did the Leeser Library contain besides printed books? Unfortunately, Adler's sixty-five-page catalogue did not include a sketch of the collection's scope, and the inventory made no mention of manuscripts or personal correspondence.³⁰ A year after the project, Adler made a reference to manuscripts in the library but did not offer any further details.³¹ It is doubtful whether the initial book bequest included Leeser's personal letters. Decades after Leeser died, Hackenburg testified that he and Sulzberger "found among his effects many strictly private letters, concerning family and business affairs. Every vestige of this correspondence," confessed Hackenburg, "was entirely destroyed."³²

The sojourns continued. Sulzberger moved the library into Touro Hall, a building constructed by the Hebrew Education Society in 1891. There the collection eventually served the teachers and students enrolled in the nascent Gratz College (founded in 1895) before the school moved into larger quarters at Congregation Mikveh Israel. Many felt it a shame that one of the richest Judaica collections in the United States sat underused. At one point, Morais, Leeser's successor at Mikveh Israel, tried to procure the Leeser Library for the Jewish Theological Seminary.³³ Some volumes, owing to the collection's holdings in American Judaica, were loaned to the recently established American Jewish Historical Society in

29 Cyrus Adler, *Catalogue of the Leeser Library* (Philadelphia: Edward Hirsch, 1883).

30 "Maimonides College," *Jewish Messenger* (7 August 1868): 3.

31 Cyrus Adler, "The Jewish Academy of America," *American Hebrew* (14 December 1894): 181.

32 William B. Hackenburg, "Acceptance of the Custody of the Leeser Library," *Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning Register* (1913): 38.

33 "For Jewish Law and Learning," *Jewish Exponent* (1 April 1892): 2.

New York.³⁴ The impact was still minimal.

This explains Adler's letter to Sulzberger to reunify Leeser's books. On 10 March 1913, the Leeser Library finally received a worthy reception at the Dropsie College Founders' Day celebration. The college was the lasting testament to Moses Dropsie, another devotee of Leeser who had authorized funds in his estate to establish a school of higher learning in the same spirit, it was alleged, as Leeser's defunct Maimonides College. The local journalists noted that the annual Founders' Day was "unusually interesting this year owing to several presentations made to the College on that occasion." The speakers who moved up and down the dais were all part of the Philadelphia Group, which boasted an air of culture and tradition that it credited to Leeser's influence.³⁵

The major presentation was the deposit of the Leeser Library, by then numbering 1,400 volumes.³⁶ Dropsie himself had made a number of book donations to grow the collection.³⁷ Edwin Wolf read aloud a resolution passed by the Hebrew Education Society to transfer the books, since Dropsie was "an institution established to carry on educational and scientific work akin to the work for which the Maimonides College was founded."³⁸ In recognition, Dropsie College's board of governors set up a plaque that likewise justified the donation and Dropsie as the heir to Maimonides College:

In memory of Isaac Leeser, born December 12th, 1806, died February 1st, 1868, Rabbi, Author, Translator of the Bible, Editor of the Occident and of the Prayer Book, whose Library bequeathed by him, for use of Maimonides College to the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia, has been placed by that Society in the custody of the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate learning.³⁹

34 Anonymous to David Sulzberger, 5 March 1909, Box 91, Folder 26, I-1, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

35 "Founder's Day Observed at Dropsie College," *Jewish Exponent* (14 March 1913): 6.

36 "Dropsie College News," *American Hebrew* (4 October 1912): 628.

37 "Literary," *American Hebrew* (17 August 1888): 21; Ben David, "Our Philadelphia Letter," *American Hebrew* (16 November 1888): 24.

38 Edward [sic] Wolf, "Transfer of Custody of Leeser Library," *Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning Register* (1913): 28.

39 Wolf, "Transfer," 29.

The event could not overdo Leeser's legacy. Hackenburg accepted Leeser's library as a "tribute to one whom I knew from childhood and for whom as I advanced in years my affection ripened into a very close and loving friendship."⁴⁰ Hackenburg, noted above as one of the trustees of Leeser's estate, also prepared a short lecture. "This great man in Israel," stated Hackenburg about Leeser, "was known in his time and is perpetuated in Jewish history as an eminent Rabbi, educator, author, editor and publisher of Jewish books, founder of the Jewish Press of America and the first Minister of our faith in this country to preach in the vernacular."⁴¹ Hackenburg rehearsed the highlights of Leeser's life, from his travails at Mikveh Israel to his polemics against Wise. In closing the program, Adler, who served as president of Dropsie at the time, triumphantly proclaimed that "the name of Isaac Leeser is secure."⁴²

The Search for Leeser's Letters

Adler urged Sulzberger to write a biography of Leeser. Recall that Sulzberger had started to collect biographical information on Leeser and written to the latter's relatives in Europe not too long after Leeser's death. From time to time Sulzberger was called upon to lecture on Leeser, as he did in 1881 at the local Young Men's Hebrew Association.⁴³ However, Sulzberger never did find time in his busy schedule—he was among the founders of the Jewish Publication Society in 1888, helped reorganize the Jewish Theological Seminary around the turn of the century, and in 1895 was elected a judge on Philadelphia's Court of Common Pleas—to compose a book on Leeser.⁴⁴ By February 1904, Sulzberger regretted aloud that "no real memoir of him has ever been published, and that

40 Hackenburg, "Acceptance," 30.

41 Hackenburg, "Acceptance," 30.

42 Cyrus Adler, "Address of the President," *Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning Register* (1913), 41.

43 See, e.g., "Isaac Leeser," *American Hebrew* (2 June 1881): 28.

44 Note that the long-lasting Jewish Publication Society was founded in 1888 but some of its founders saw themselves as a continuation of Leeser's short-lived Jewish Publication Society, established in 1845. See Sarna, *JPS*, 1–4.

phase in the history of our people remains as yet uncleared.”⁴⁵

There was a silver lining. Sulzberger’s interest in writing about Leeser brought into his possession a cache of letters that might otherwise have been lost. Sulzberger had reportedly obtained a “small gathering of Leeser letters from Ella Cozens,” the granddaughter of Deliah Cozens, the seamstress who had leased a room to Leeser and handled some of the newspaper editor’s business affairs.⁴⁶ The Cozens women had reportedly retained a significant portion of Leeser’s correspondence and, over time, transferred them to Sulzberger for his research.⁴⁷ These were evidently not the very personal letters that Sulzberger and Hackenburg had destroyed upon Leeser’s demise. They were very likely, as Hackenburg later put it, among the “large number of letters relating to public affairs which were preserved and have in several instances proven of valuable service.”⁴⁸ The Cozens had retained these letters because at least a good portion were important for settling Leeser’s business accounts, a task that Sulzberger left for Deliah Cozens and her daughter, Ellen.⁴⁹

Sulzberger also reached out to the descendants of Leeser’s contemporaries for letters. This circle of Leeser’s peers included Reverend Abraham de Sola of Montreal. His son, Clarence de Sola, wrote to Sulzberger on 17 July 1917 to ask the Philadelphian to return a series of “correspondence between my late father and the Reverend Isaac Leeser.”⁵⁰ Sulzberger sent the letters back to Clarence de Sola two days later without taking any time to make copies, an indication that he had given up on his Leeser project.⁵¹ All in all, Sulzberger’s most extensive treatment

45 “Judge Sulzberger on Isaac Leeser,” *Jewish Exponent* (5 February 1904): 2.

46 Maxwell Whiteman, “A Preliminary Inquiry into the Disassembling of the Leeser Collection,” Draft 7 April 1994, 19, Box 144, MSS SP-018, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

47 Whiteman, “A Preliminary Inquiry,” 16.

48 Hackenburg, “Acceptance,” 38.

49 Ellen Cozens to Mayer Sulzberger, 7 May 1868, Box 4, Folder 1, ARC MS-25, KCAJS.

50 Clarence I. De Sola to Mayer Sulzberger, 17 July 1917, Box 6, Folder 1, ARC MS-25, KCAJS.

51 Clarence I. De Sola to Mayer Sulzberger, 23 July 1917, Box 6, Folder 1, ARC MS-25, KCAJS.

of Leeser's life was an entry in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, published in 1904. In that essay, Sulzberger made use of his correspondence collection, quoting from a letter Leeser wrote to Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of London concerning Leeser's "own want of proper qualification" as a scholar.⁵² It was, as far as I can tell, the first time that one of Leeser's private letters was quoted in a published work. Whether Sulzberger derived that correspondence from Ella Cozens or another source is altogether unknown. He did not state the provenance of the letter.

Why did Sulzberger not make a Leeser biography a greater priority? Perhaps he thought that others had adequately honored Leeser's legacy. In 1888, the journalist Isaac Markens provided Leeser with two pages in *The Hebrews in America*.⁵³ A few years later, Henry Morais, based on a series of well-received newspaper articles, produced a work titled *The Jews of Philadelphia* that included a section on Leeser.⁵⁴ Two decades later, Peter Wiernik published his *History of the Jews in America* and was likewise generous in his treatment of Leeser.⁵⁵ Sulzberger was possibly very pleased that some traditionalists had taken up the cause and delivered lectures on Leeser's battles on behalf of Orthodox Judaism. Perhaps Sulzberger was satisfied that others penned editorials that invoked Leeser in support of the traditional Jewish rabbinate.⁵⁶

But Leeser's star started to fade at the end of Sulzberger's lifetime. This was apparent in a number of appraisals published on the fiftieth anniversary of Leeser's death. In Gotthard Deutsch's evaluation, Leeser was "so much inferior in philosophic and theological training," and someone, alleged this Reform leader, who "did not prognosticate

52 M. Su., "Leeser, Isaac," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904), 7:663.

53 Isaac Markens, *The Hebrews in America* (New York: Isaac Markens, 1888), 291–293.

54 Henry Samuel Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia: Their History from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Levy Type Company, 1894), 45–48.

55 Peter Wiernik, *History of the Jews in America* (New York: Jewish Press, 1912), 171–172.

56 See, e.g., "Tekvah Zion Society," *Hebrew Standard* (27 November 1903): 4. On a defense of the Orthodox rabbinate, see Meldola de Sola, "Jewish Ministers," *Hebrew Standard* (December 23, 1904): 1; Meldola de Sola, "Jewish Ministers?" *Hebrew Standard* (21 April 1905): 2.

the future correctly.”⁵⁷ His loyal Philadelphia disciples defended Leeser against these charges that he was an “ignoramus” and incapable of reading Hebrew.⁵⁸ The claims of illiteracy were puerile, but the questions about Leeser’s theological training had some substance, especially when compared to well-trained religious reformers such as Max Lilienthal and David Einhorn.⁵⁹ In a measured rebuttal, Sulzberger admitted that “there may have been greater Talmudists, there may have been more eloquent orators and more graceful writers; but no greater genius, no better Jew and no purer man than Isaac Leeser.”⁶⁰

Few other traditionalists beyond Philadelphia came to Leeser’s defense. One reason for this is that most Orthodox Jews at the turn of the twentieth century hailed from Eastern Europe and not Germany, where Leeser was from. They therefore did not pay much mind to Leeser’s legacy. A Reform rabbi speaking at the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis mused that it was “rather strange” that Leeser, a “foremost pioneer leader of orthodox Judaism in America should have been overlooked by those who champion the very same construction of Judaism.”⁶¹ Rabbi Henry Englander continued about Leeser: “His memory certainly deserved a better fate from those who are earnestly striving to perpetuate traditional Judaism in this land.”⁶² In his published paper, Englander included more than two hundred citations, almost all from Leeser’s *Occident*. His conclusion, after dissecting Leeser’s activities and positions, was that, had his subject been in favor of the “cause of reform,” then “his name would undoubtedly have been linked to-day with the great pioneer reformers as one of the most practical and energetic workers in the cause of Israel in this country.”⁶³

57 “Isaac Leeser,” *American Israelite* (31 January 1918): 1.

58 Solomon Solis Cohen, “Isaac Leeser’s Scholarship,” *Jewish Exponent* (2 June 1922): 8.

59 On these university-trained rabbis, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 244–263.

60 Mayer Sulzberger, “Isaac Leeser: An Appreciation,” *Jewish Exponent* (8 February 1918): 9.

61 Henry Englander, “Isaac Leeser, 1806–1868,” *CCAR Year Book* 28 (1918): 213.

62 Englander, “Isaac Leeser,” 213.

63 Englander, “Isaac Leeser,” 252.

Englander surmised that Leeser had been more or less forgotten because he was a vocal champion of Orthodox Judaism.

In New York, the tradition-abiding Jewish press reproduced Englander's essay without further elaboration.⁶⁴ Yet it upset the Philadelphia Group, but not because the Reform rabbi had misconstrued the facts. Sulzberger's friend, Solomon Solis-Cohen, asked a young researcher, Solomon Grayzel, to assess Englander's research, and the latter reported back that the article was, on the whole, fair, and that, particularly beyond Philadelphia, "Leeser's influence was not as strong as it might have been."⁶⁵ Just weeks before Englander's presentation, Solis-Cohen had spoken at the commencement ceremonies of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York about the rabbinical school's "past and future." He credited Leeser as the first who "prepared the way [for] those who founded and continued the Seminary."⁶⁶ That was apparently sufficient, as he decided not to issue a formal response to Englander's low assessment of Leeser's impact on American Jewish life.

Losing Leeser in the American Jewish Past

Sulzberger passed away in April 1923. His demise signaled an inflection point for Leeser's disciples. Shortly after Sulzberger's death, Solis-Cohen spoke about his late friend at Dropsie College's Founder's Day program. He reflected on the "remarkable succession of leaders in Judaism" that he described as the "Philadelphia Group." He explained that "there are brilliant names in this dynasty of light and learning—Isaac Leeser, Sabato Morais, Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler. It has existed for more than a century, extending into the present academic year of Dropsie College. To think of Jewish educational activities local and national, is to call its roll."⁶⁷ The editor Philip Cowen, whose closest friends had

64 "Isaac Leeser and Isaac M. Wise," *Hebrew Standard* (7 March 1919): 1–2.

65 "Grayzel's Comments on 'Isaac Leeser' by Henry Englander," undated, Box 8, Folder 21, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

66 Solomon Solis-Cohen, *The Jewish Theological Seminary: Past and Future* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1919), 39.

67 Solomon Solis-Cohen, *Judaism and Science, with Other Addresses and Papers* (Philadelphia: self-published, 1940), 246.

been raised in Leeser's circle, was likewise convinced of the importance of this group and suggested that a "whole book could be written about Philadelphia, that staunchly Jewish city."⁶⁸

Adler was still focused on a book about Leeser. He therefore prevailed on at least one other member of Philadelphia's Jewish aristocrats to produce a biography. In 1930, Adler convinced Emily Solis-Cohen, Solomon Solis-Cohen's daughter, to write a Leeser biography. Born in 1886, she had never met Leeser but had learned about him from her father and the other Leeser acolytes of Philadelphia. She was a gifted poet and writer. She never married and, in keeping with her family's tradition, remained very active in Jewish communal affairs.

In 1930, Emily Solis-Cohen agreed to write a book on Leeser for the Jewish Publication Society (JPS).⁶⁹ She saw it as an opportunity to capture, through Leeser, an epoch in her family's history that few people still recalled. Based in Philadelphia, JPS was one of the few organizations that still recalled Leeser as part of its institutional memory. Leeser founded a short-lived incarnation of JPS in 1845.⁷⁰ In 1888, Sulzberger and Adler ranked among the founders of its new, long-lasting iteration and claimed, however much a stretch, Leeser's "false start" as part of its origin. JPS's other leaders therefore welcomed Adler's invitation to Emily Solis-Cohen. While she was aware of the bountiful material captured in the pages of Leeser's newspaper and many books, she was made aware of and had particular interest in using the many Leeser-related letters accumulated by Sulzberger. Sulzberger had transferred hundreds of Leeser letters to Dropsie College, which also hosted the Leeser Library.

On 11 July 1930, President Adler informed Dropsie's librarian, Joseph Reider, that "Miss Emily Solis-Cohen would like to examine a manuscript in printed materials with regard to Isaac Leeser with a view, at my suggestion to her, to prepare a biographical sketch of Isaac Leeser." Adler instructed Reider to fetch a "large box in the vault of Leeser's papers which have never been examined." Preserved in this way, the

68 Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York: International, 1932), 421.

69 Sarna, *JPS*, 190–191.

70 See, e.g., Ephraim Lederer, "The Jewish Publication Society of America—Its Origin and Growth," *Jewish Exponent* (11 April 1913): 9.

Leeser letters were likely spared from the mismanagement and disorder that struck other archival collections at Dropsie.⁷¹ Adler provided her with near-carte blanche access to the untapped correspondence. “If she wants to put them in order,” Adler wrote to Reider, “I think that the best place for her to do so would be in the north basement, which is cool; or maybe in one of the unoccupied rooms upstairs.”⁷²

Emily Solis-Cohen worked fastidiously and with the considerable support of her doting father, one of the few remaining Leeser students and members of the Philadelphia Group. She reproduced copies of hundreds of pieces of Leeser correspondence and other useful archival materials such as synagogue board minutes and bylaws of Philadelphia agencies. To do this, she commissioned translations of materials written in Hebrew and German.⁷³ She busied her father’s medical office assistant with the task of transcribing the original texts and successfully beseeched Adler to permit her to remove the archival materials from Dropsie College. She wrote to Adler: “Until Miss Jamison goes on her vacation, father has placed her services at my disposal on the days that he does not come to the office. I should like your permission, therefore, to bring some of the Leeser letters etc., here in order to have some typing done. We shall both be very careful of them.”⁷⁴

Emily Solis-Cohen desired to add to Dropsie’s collection of Leeser’s correspondence. She placed an advertisement in Philadelphia’s Jewish press asking the whereabouts of additional Leeser letters. “I shall appreciate any information your readers have relative to Mr. Leeser’s works,” she explained to a local newspaper publisher. “Any original letters or papers

71 For a brief description of the poor archival preservation at Dropsie, see Moshe Davis, “Sabato Morais: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography of His Writings,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (1947): 60.

72 Cyrus Adler to Joseph Reider, 11 July 1930, Box 5, Folder 16, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

73 Emily Solis-Cohen to Cyrus Adler, 14 July 1932, Box 8, Folder 22 ARC MS-18, KCAJS; Solomon Grayzel Hebrew-to-English renderings in Box 7, Folder 19, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

74 Emily Solis-Cohen to Cyrus Adler, 14 July 1932, Box 8, Folder 22, ARC MS-18, KCAJS. For Adler’s reluctantly agreeable response, see Cyrus Adler to Emily Solis-Cohen, 15 July 1932, Box 8, Folder 22, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

sent me will be copied and returned.”⁷⁵ Like Sulzberger before her, she wrote to the children of Leeser’s contemporaries for papers.⁷⁶ She also commissioned the American Jewish Historical Society in New York to transcribe and (when authored in a non-English language) translate correspondence related to Leeser in its repositories.⁷⁷

In the end, however, Emily Solis-Cohen struggled to synthesize the vast primary material she had accumulated about Leeser. She endured starts and stops for two different Leeser manuscripts; one she titled “Leeser: American Beginner” and another “Isaac Leeser: The Man and His Destiny.” In December 1939, the JPS publication committee reported that she had completed a rough draft and that “if the manuscript met the approval of our readers, it could be scheduled as the first book for 1941.”⁷⁸ But when the committee met in 1941, the group learned that her work was not ready for production. She had only recently “delivered part of her manuscript on the Biography of Isaac Leeser and that this section would be submitted to readers.” No timetable was offered for an expected publication date.⁷⁹ Two years later, there was not much optimism shared among the committee members:

The Editor and Executive Director have had several meetings with Miss Solis-Cohen and informed her that her manuscript must be completed in 1944, so that it may be published in 1945. The one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first American Jewish Publication Society will fall in 1945 and, since this Society was organized by Isaac Leeser, it is essential that the biography appear in 1945.⁸⁰

75 Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr., “Isaac Leeser Data Desired,” *Jewish Exponent* (4 March 1932): 10.

76 See, e.g., Emily Solis-Cohen to Rienzi de Cordova, 13 August 1934, Box 6, Folder 2, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

77 Isidore S. Meyer to Emily Solis-Cohen, 9 April 1941, Box 6, Folder 2, ARC MS-18, KCAJS.

78 Minutes of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society of America, 11 December 1939, Box 132, Folder 5, SCRC-38, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

79 Minutes of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society of America, 11 May 1941, Box 132, Folder 6, SCRC-38.

80 Report of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1 May 1943, Box 132, Folder 6, SCRC-38.

Emily Solis-Cohen never published the biography. In fact, very few people wrote about Leeser during the interwar period. If authors wrote about him at all, he was cast as a sidelight or foil in American Jewish history. The American Jewish Historical Society and its patrons considered themselves antiquarians and preferred to focus on the Colonial Era.⁸¹ Writers interested in Leeser's nineteenth century were piqued by the religious leaders who prospered in the period, but the lion's share zeroed in on Reform Jews. For instance, Lee Levinger, author of a popular children's book commissioned by the Department of Synagogue and School Extensions of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, devoted a few pages to Leeser in order to provide context for the much more extensive discussion on Wise and Reform Judaism.⁸² Leeser did not provide the usable past that animated those eager to explore the yellowed pages of American Jewish history.

Rediscovering Isaac Leeser

In December 1940, the historian Moshe Davis published a pair of articles on Leeser in the American Hebrew press declaring that Leeser "had raised the flag of Conservatism for American Judaism."⁸³ Leeser, of course, described himself as an Orthodox Jew. Yet it was altogether clear that the synagogue-focused German-style Orthodox Judaism that Leeser professed did not match the Eastern European Orthodox (i.e., yeshiva/day school-focused) folkway that had supplanted it in the twentieth century. For most of his career, Leeser led a Spanish-Portuguese congregation that prayed in the Sephardic rite. His interests in Judaica were vast, and he wrote long essays on the Bible and Jewish philosophy. The Eastern European Orthodox Jews, by contrast, were focused on the Talmud. To these newcomers,

81 Jeffrey S. Gurock, "From *Publications* to *American Jewish History*: The *Journal of the American Jewish Historical Society* and the Writing of American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 81 (Winter 1993–1994): 174.

82 Lee J. Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1930), 219–223.

83 Moshe Davis, "R' Yitzhak Leeser: Ma-Roshei-ha-Bonim shel Yahadut America," *Hadoar* 20 (December 1940): 119. The earlier installment appeared under the same title in *Hadoar* 13 (December 1940): 100–102.

Leeser was much too eclectic, even modern. Davis therefore argued that Leeser was more aligned with his brand of Conservative Judaism. Once again, Leeser represented a usable past for American Jews, at least for those associated with the Conservative movement.⁸⁴

Davis was determined to leverage Leeser. A decade later, in a Hebrew monograph, Davis drew a straight line between Leeser and Solomon Schechter, perhaps the most pivotal figure in the formation of Conservative Judaism in the twentieth century.⁸⁵ To make a claim for greater authenticity, Davis—in yet another book, one based on the earlier Hebrew volume—described Leeser, although not without eliciting criticism, as the “first spokesman of the Historical School,” a group that the historian traced to the nineteenth century, and that in due time evolved into the Conservative movement.⁸⁶ Davis’s work elicited much conversation, a signal to historians at that time that he had successfully and provocatively, through Leeser and others, made American Jewish history “meaningful,” “relevant,” and “timely.”⁸⁷ With somewhat more subtlety, the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Conservative movement’s flagship, produced, in conjunction with NBC, a dramatic radio broadcast about Leeser for its popular *Eternal Light* series. The short radio episode presented Leeser and the organizations he founded as precursors to the seminary and its myriad partner Conservative institutions.⁸⁸

84 Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter’s Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 153–154.

85 Moshe Davis, *Yahadut America Be-Hitpathutah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1951), xxi.

86 Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), 19. On criticism of Davis’s argument, see Charles S. Liebman, “Orthodoxy in Nineteenth Century America,” *Tradition* 6 (Spring–Summer 1964): 132–140.

87 Jonathan D. Sarna, “*Achavah* and History: Reflections on the Historical Emphasis of Moshe Davis,” in *America and Zion: Essays and Papers in Memory of Moshe Davis* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 26.

88 Joseph Mindel, “Portrait of a Man,” *Eternal Light* 678 (6 November 1960): 11–12. On the radio series, see Jeffrey Shandler and Elihu Katz, “Broadcasting American Judaism: The Radio and Television Department of the Jewish Theological Seminary,”

Others also rediscovered Leeser in the postwar era. The historian Hyman Grinstein cited Leeser's published works and articles throughout his 1945 tome on New York's Jews in the 1800s.⁸⁹ Three years later, Anita Lebeson published a popular work on American Jewish history and devoted large sections of chapters on "An Age of Titans and Anonymous Men" (to her, Leeser was a "Titan") and on the battles between Reform (Wise) and the Orthodox (Leeser) to Leeser.⁹⁰ In 1954, Lebeson, in commemoration of the American Jewish tercentenary, included a slide of Leeser in a filmstrip of thirty-six images and captions that told the story of American Jewish life since the first group had arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654.⁹¹ However, none of these writers, including Davis, made Leeser the focal point of their research.

The most pivotal (and complicated) figure in the reemergence of Leeser was a book dealer, Maxwell Whiteman. Whiteman was the twelfth child of an immigrant Orthodox rabbi who, like many other Eastern European emigrés, settled in Philadelphia's Northern Liberties neighborhood. Like Leeser, Whiteman was short and boasted few professional credentials. He dropped out of Temple University because his impoverished parents could not pay his bills, and he did not see the point in working to cover his tuition.⁹² Whiteman, now a college dropout, spent much of his time in the secondhand bookstores in South Philadelphia. He had found blue-collar work at a leather factory but quit within a year, as he could not handle the rigid hours of labor. Instead,

in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 2:365–401.

89 See citations in Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), 629.

90 Anita Libman Lebeson, *Pilgrim People* (New York: Harper, 1950), 296–333 and 334–375.

91 Anita Libman Lebeson, "The Jews in America: A Filmstrip, Part II" (New York: Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1954). On the 300th anniversary of American Jewish life, see Arthur A. Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945–1955," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 8 (1992): 3–20.

92 Jim Sanford, "An Interview with Maxwell Whiteman," 13 December 1994, 6, Box 121, MSS SP-018, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

he spent his time around books. His favorite spot was Leary's Books on Ninth and Chestnut. He divided his time between reading and discussing the book business with the close-knit circle of men who plied and peddled rare and interesting books and manuscripts. He also made time to meet Elizabeth Delano; the pair married in the mid-1930s.⁹³

The Philadelphia secondhand book scene was unique. Particularly before World War II, Philadelphia was full of old buildings. "Philadelphia was expanding," Whiteman once explained, "but it wasn't constantly being rebuilt. So that many of the older establishments in the original parts of the city were able to produce an unbelievable volume of books, paper, and manuscripts." Many old buildings in downtown Philadelphia had housed the residences and offices of noted families during the Colonial Era and Early Republic. The most entrepreneurial individuals in the local book buying scene, Whiteman among them, explored these sites and made deals with the present occupants for caches of documents hidden in cabinets and other rather innocuous places. When there was no one available to make a purchase, Philadelphia's bookdealers made their own judgments on whether a trove was free for the taking.⁹⁴

Whiteman kept eclectic company. He testified that some of his colleagues and business partners had gone to jail for transacting with counterfeit goods.⁹⁵ Yet he also counted some of the most elite collectors among his acquaintances, a status he acquired from his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter of a prominent New England family.⁹⁶ One such individual was Edwin Wolf II, a book collector who traced his own bibliophilia to his father's friendship with Sulzberger.⁹⁷ The elder Wolf was a "life-

93 Ron Avery, "Maxwell Whiteman, Historian," *Philadelphia Daily News* (13 May 1995): 20.

94 Avery, "Maxwell Whiteman," 19. See also Jeffrey A. Cohen, "Evidence of Place: Resources Documenting the Philadelphia Area's Architectural Past," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 124 (January–April 2000): 145–201.

95 Sanford, "Interview," 12.

96 Elizabeth Delano Whiteman was not Jewish. Whiteman's marriage to Elizabeth, during a time when intermarriage was a rare thing in American Jewish life, alienated Whiteman from much of Philadelphia's Jewish establishment. My thanks to Jonathan Sarna for pointing this out.

97 Edwin Wolf, "From Edwin Wolf," *Jewish Exponent* (27 April 1923): 9.

long member of Rodeph Shalom,” Philadelphia’s leading Reform congregation, and was therefore a degree or so removed from the other Philadelphia Jewish leaders who had gravitated around the tradition-affirming Mikveh Israel. Still, Wolf was a respected member of that group and a major figure within the leadership of Dropsie College (he spoke at the 1913 Founder’s Day event at which the Leeser Library was transferred to Dropsie) and the Jewish Publication Society.⁹⁸ Edwin Wolf II held an affinity for the Philadelphia Jewish aristocrats, among them his first employer, the rare book dealer A. S. W. Rosenbach. Before he met Wolf, Whiteman had traveled with dealers who liked to voice their “scorn for Philadelphia’s high-end antiquarian booksellers” and swap stories about “treasures snatched at flea markets, of first editions rescued from junk bins, of snooty, upper-crust booksellers bearded in their dens.”⁹⁹ Now Whiteman maintained a foothold in both, very different social circles.

Edwin Wolf II befriended Whiteman in the 1940s and brought the latter into close contact with the most affluent Philadelphia families such as the Wideners, the Elkins, and the Stetsons.¹⁰⁰ In return, Wolf asked Whiteman to help him write a series of newspaper columns on Philadelphia Jewish history.¹⁰¹ For each installment, Whiteman “prepared copy consisting of six to eight pages,” and Wolf “reviewed them, catching grammatical slips and punctuation and occasionally introducing a clever twist of phrase.”¹⁰² Whiteman and Wolf issued effusive praise of Leeser in their final installment, published in the pages of the *Jewish Exponent*:

98 “Edwin Wolf,” *Jewish Exponent* (21 December 1934): 4.

99 The quotation concerns Sam Kleiman, one of Whiteman’s mentors. See Gregory Gibson, *Hubert’s Freaks: The Rare-Book Dealer, the Times Square Talker, and the Lost Photos of Diane Arbus* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2008), 35.

100 Edwin Wolf II and John F. Fleming, *Rosenbach: A Biography* (Cleveland: World, 1960), 62–63.

101 Edwin Wolf II, *An Autobiographical Sketch* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1991), 15. See also Sanford, “Interview,” 26–27.

102 Maxwell Whiteman, *Edwin Wolf 2nd and History of the Jews of Philadelphia: A Riposte* (Hatboro: Amber Beattle, 1992), 6. Whiteman produced this slim, eight-page pamphlet to respond to what he perceived as slights by Wolf to him in the former’s autobiography.

With his coming, a new era opened for the Jews of Philadelphia. Leeser emerged as not only the leading Jew of the city, but of the whole country. The years of American Jewish history from 1830 until the close of the Civil War are, in fact, the "Age of Leeser." He wrote schoolbooks for children, prayer-books for his congregants, an English translation of the Bible, and treatises on Judaism. He published the most influential and most widely-read Jewish periodical, the first really national Jewish magazine, in the United States: the *Occident*. He worked to promote Jewish education on all levels, from a Hebrew Sunday School Society to Maimonides College, the first American Jewish theological seminary. He fostered a plan to unite all the Jewish congregations in the country into a single national body. He stimulated and guided new philanthropic institutions in Philadelphia, the Hebrew Education Society, the Jewish Hospital, and the first Jewish Publication Society. And he was the effective and tireless defender of traditional Judaism against the incursions of the new spirit of liberalism, as well as of all Jews against invasions of their rights at home and persecutions abroad. In brief, a formless, drifting, haphazardly growing American Jewish community was given leadership and direction and substance by Isaac Leeser.¹⁰³

Whiteman's work caught the interest of Jacob Rader Marcus, the founder of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. Marcus's interest surprised Whiteman, since Korn had initially discouraged the Whiteman and Wolf project on the grounds that "the period was carefully covered by Dr. Jacob R. Marcus in *Early American Jewry*, which had just appeared."¹⁰⁴ Yet Marcus recognized Whiteman's facility in accessing rare newspapers and manuscripts and ability to further the literature pioneered by Marcus.¹⁰⁵ Whiteman moved to Cincinnati to

103 Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, "The History of the Jews of Philadelphia: A Period Ends," *Jewish Exponent* (8 July 1955): 17. Republished in Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957), 372–373.

104 Whiteman, *Edwin Wolf 2nd*, 5.

105 It is unknown if Marcus believed Whiteman's claim that he had "read the entire colonial Philadelphia press, both German and English and had extracted every Jewish reference including many of the numerous advertisements from shopkeepers to socialites, and the ephemeral wanderers of the day." See Whiteman, *Edwin Wolf 2nd*, 4.

serve as Marcus's assistant. Marcus found value in Whiteman's facility with German texts and thought it was a rather good thing that "Mr. Whiteman has been identified intimately with the antiquarian book trade."¹⁰⁶ Marcus tasked Whiteman with editing the AJA's journal and dispatched him to acquire or make copies of materials to add to its growing repository. One of Whiteman's first projects was to return to Philadelphia and visit Dropsie College's collection of Leeser letters that Emily Solis-Cohen had examined.¹⁰⁷ Whiteman also made time to work with Edwin Wolf II to turn their serialized articles into a book on Colonial Jewish life in Philadelphia. Marcus graciously described the volume as "one of the very best" in the field. Certainly, opined Marcus, the "best history yet written of Jews in any American city."¹⁰⁸

Whiteman developed an affinity for Leeser, a veritable "underdog" in American Jewish life. That point of view resonated with Whiteman, who constantly felt underappreciated as one of a small number of productive scholars in the nascent field of American Jewish history. In Cincinnati, he felt overshadowed by Marcus. Despite his articles and books in American Jewish history, Whiteman still struggled for recognition among better-trained scholars such as Davis, and Grinstein, and Salo Baron.¹⁰⁹ Unlike those historians, as well as his boss (Marcus), Whiteman lacked a doctorate.¹¹⁰ For Whiteman and Marcus, the consternation festered into a shared "mutual dissatisfaction with one another."¹¹¹ Marcus fired Whiteman from the American Jewish Archives in 1959.

106 "Archives Appoints Maxwell Whiteman Aide to Director," *American Israelite* (13 October 1955): 7.

107 Whiteman, "Preliminary Inquiry," 43.

108 Jacob R. Marcus, "Leading American Jewish Historian Says Wolf-Whiteman Book 'Best' City History," *Jewish Exponent* (22 March 1957): 15.

109 Gurock, "From *Publications* to *American Jewish History*," 228–230.

110 Many years later, Whiteman revealed his discomfort, especially since none of these learned men had any formal training in American Jewish history: "Those with all their Ph.D.s and all their experience in history and so on—I learned that most of them who might have a lot of experience of Jewish history have damned little knowledge of American history, and certainly the combination and amalgamation of both are essential." See Sanford, "Interview," 26.

111 Whiteman, "Preliminary Inquiry," 45.

Whiteman returned to Philadelphia and the “old book trade.”¹¹² He also continued his research on Leeser and plumbed the Dropsie College library for the Leeser letters with which he had become familiar during his work for Marcus. In February 1959, Whiteman shared his research at the American Jewish Historical Society’s annual meeting and published a longer version of that talk in the society’s journal.¹¹³ Whiteman’s painstaking article included 223 footnotes to make the claim that Leeser, through his own efforts and tutelage of the Philadelphia Group, “projected most of the basic ideas to which present communal life owes its spiritual origin.”¹¹⁴ The emphasis on Leeser’s role in furthering all sectors of Jewish life in the United States went far beyond Davis’s assertions about the Conservative movement. Soon after, Dropsie College hired Whiteman to serve as librarian, a part-time position meant to provide stable income and enable him to diversify his other, more frenetic work.¹¹⁵

In that role, Whiteman assumed the mantle of custodian of the American Jewish past, going so far as to police, in private correspondence, how Marcus and the American Jewish Archives used the Leeser letters and other materials copied from Dropsie College.¹¹⁶ To the public, Whiteman touted the Leeser letters to sound the alarm on the importance of preserving American Jewish history. “The Leeser collection documents every endeavor to establish a center of Jewish life,” wrote Whiteman in the Philadelphia Jewish press. To those who recalled the speeches delivered by the Philadelphia Group, this was standard fare. But to many others, it was a rather new thing that Leeser was one of the major figures of American Jewish history. Whiteman testified to the usefulness of the Dropsie collection for studying all areas of American life, “ranging

112 Whiteman, “Preliminary Inquiry,” 47.

113 Maxwell Whiteman, “Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia: A Study in National Jewish Influence,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 48 (June 1959): 207–244.

114 Whiteman, “Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia,” 207.

115 “140 Students Expected for New Dropsie Term,” *Jewish Exponent* (18 September 1959): 15.

116 Maxwell Whiteman to Jacob R. Marcus, 21 September 1962, MS-687, Box 96, Folder 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

from the New England states to the deep plantation South, from the urban communities of the Atlantic seaboard to the passes of the Sierra Madres.”¹¹⁷ In other words, Leeser’s letters and legacy were ubiquitous, perhaps even grander than erstwhile figures such as Wise and Gratz. That Whiteman desired to become Leeser’s piper is understandable, as his personal predicament drew him to Leeser. “Isaac Leeser,” announced Whiteman at an annual meeting of the Jewish Publication Society, “envisaged books as the gateway to Jewish life.” Whiteman saw in Leeser a like-minded, indefatigable spirit. “Occasionally his efforts met with success and frequently they were blocked by apathy and indifference.”¹¹⁸ That evaluation applied to both Leeser and Whiteman.

The Leeser Letter Diaspora

Whiteman also lamented that much had been lost. He expressed dismay that Dropsie’s American Judaica collections ought to have been much larger. To local Jewish leaders, Whiteman confessed that “irreplaceable records of the community had been lost or destroyed for lack of adequate means of preserving them.”¹¹⁹ He described the “great tragedy” of archival amateurism and the “junking” of materials that had “dumped” historical artifacts into the secondhand marketplace. In his recounting of the situation, Whiteman traced the archival malfeasance at Dropsie College to the 1950s:

At that time the presidential secretary, eager to clean out the boiler room of cartons of paper that were considered a fire hazard, sent the following materials to the nearest junk shop: a portrait in oil of Sabato Morais; a folio scrapbook of Morais; a complete collection of the pamphlet and circular literature of Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel, including much material on Rebecca Gratz; approximately 160 letters of Cyrus Adler and a similar number of Judge Mayer Sulzberger, the grand bibliophile;

117 Whiteman, “Isaac Leeser’s Letters,” 17.

118 Maxwell Whiteman, “Isaac Leeser: Moulder of American Jewish Life,” *JPS Bookmark* 3 (June 1956): 4.

119 “Whiteman Calls for Preservation of Historic Data on Jewish Life,” *Jewish Exponent* (27 October 1961): 3.



AJA Hanukkah party attendees: EthelJane Callner (front); Sarah Grossman (left); Jeanette Weiss (middle); and Maxwell Whiteman (right); 13 Dec. 1955.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

and seven known genizah fragments, including the Unique Egyptian Haggadah.... The most unfortunate outcome of this blind divestiture was the dispersal of letters of Isaac Leeser.¹²⁰

Dropsie's head man told the full tale a different way. In 1951, President Abraham Neuman wrote to Whiteman about a stash of correspondence and books that had come into the latter's possession "through one or more book dealers." Whiteman claimed that Meyer Furman, the dealer who had sold him the papers "introduced me to Isaac Leeser

120 Maxwell Whiteman, "The Association of Jewish Libraries in its Cultural Milieu," *Judaica Librarianship* 5 (Spring 1990): 151.

of whom [Furman] knew nothing and I perhaps less.”¹²¹ Neuman ascertained that the documents were sold by Dropsie’s janitor to a junk dealer and requested that Whiteman return the materials to him for full reimbursement of his purchase.¹²² Whiteman promptly restored the materials, a gesture of trustworthiness that was part of the reason Neuman later hired him to work in Dropsie’s library.

However, Whiteman did not last all that long in the role. By his own admission, Whiteman lacked “political savvy.”¹²³ This was yet another quality that Whiteman shared with Leeser. According to Neuman, Whiteman was “given to violent displays of temper, foul language, [and] creating intolerable scenes.” Neuman fired Whiteman principally for overstepping his professional jurisdiction. Later on, Neuman alleged that Whiteman had used his access to Dropsie’s files for his own gain. “The janitor,” recorded Neuman, “told me of many instances when he was directed by Whiteman to take out packages of library books to one or more persons who were waiting outside close to the building in cars.” Whatever the case, Dropsie and Whiteman parted ways, and the College issued Whiteman an ironclad release from legal action “in connection with or growing out of his employment as Librarian.”¹²⁴

Ironically, Neuman replaced Whiteman with Rabbi Saul Wisemon.¹²⁵ Two decades later, Wisemon was arrested for stealing from Lutheran Theological Seminary in a Philadelphia suburb. Policed seized a cache of thirty thousand books, microfilms, and Torah scrolls in a warehouse Wisemon rented in Vineland, New Jersey. The district attorney alleged that Wisemon’s “love for Torah and books” became pathological, leading

121 Whiteman, “Preliminary Inquiry,” 38.

122 Abraham A. Neuman to Maxwell Whiteman, 30 November 1951, in “Motion of Defendant Maxwell Whiteman for Summary Judgment: Appendix,” 13 November 1992, Box 144, MSS SP-018, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

123 Whiteman, “Preliminary Inquiry,” 55.

124 “Letter of Release,” 30 June 1965, in “Motion of Defendant Maxwell Whiteman for Summary Judgment: Appendix,” 13 November 1992, Box 144, MSS SP-018, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

125 “Rabbi Wiseman [*sic*] Named Librarian at Dropsie,” *Jewish Exponent* (3 September 1965): 6.

to a crime spree of book heists at Dropsie College and Brandeis University, as well as “synagogues and libraries along the East Coast.”¹²⁶ Dropsie recovered missing books from Wisemon. The college never retrieved rare materials from Whiteman, who quickly reformed his reputation as a librarian and archivist for the Union League of Philadelphia. The league appreciated Whiteman’s work to “bring [its] material together,” “restore fragile, dust-laden documents,” and “catalog[ue] them.”¹²⁷ No one has ever accused Whiteman of wrongdoing in his work for the Union League.

In 1992, Dropsie, rebranded as the Annenberg Research Institute, served Whiteman with an action of replevin. The school, poised to become part of the University of Pennsylvania, possessed a formidable library, numbering 180,000 volumes, 6,000 precious books, and 250 Judaica manuscripts by the time it was acquired by the University of Pennsylvania in 1992.¹²⁸ The Annenberg Research Institute’s leaders believed that the library would have been larger, if not for Whiteman. Its holdings included about 1,300 correspondences to and from Leeser while another 800–1,200 Leeser letters remained on the open market, in the possession of dealers and collectors in the burgeoning American Judaica market.¹²⁹ The institute sued Whiteman in hopes of reclaiming some of that collection. However, the Philadelphia County Court of

126 Lawrence Harmon, “Police Arrest ‘Fugitive’ Rabbi in Fall River,” *Jewish Advocate* (9 June 1983): 1; Marie H. Orodener, “The Rabbi Spends Yom Kippur in Jail,” *Jewish Post and Opinion* (5 October 1983): 6; “A Yom Kippur Tale,” *Philadelphia Daily News* (20 September 1983): 13.

127 Maxwell Whiteman, *Pieces of Paper: Gateway to the Past* (Philadelphia: Union League of Philadelphia, 1967), 5.

128 Craig R. McCoy, “Annenberg Institute, Courted from Abroad, Will Stay in Phila.,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (29 October 1992): B3.

129 E-mail correspondence from Arthur Kiron to the author, 28 June 2023. The curious manner in which Leeser’s letters entered the marketplace has created unceasing interest in his rare publications and correspondence, among other Leeser memorabilia. In February 2009, Sotheby’s auction house sold Leeser’s gold-topped, ebony walking stick for \$37,500. The notice of sale piqued the curiosities of at least one scholar of American Judaism, who wondered aloud about the “hefty price” for an “odd bit” of American Jewish history. See Jenna Weissman Joselit, “Walk Softly, Carry a Big (\$37,500) Stick,” *Forward* (13 February 2009): 10.

Common Pleas dismissed the suit because of the formal release Dropsie had issued to Whiteman that made him, in the court's judgment, immune from all legal action.

After Whiteman, Leeser had become a central figure in American Jewish history. Korn and then Sussman followed Whiteman in producing scholarship on Leeser, although without the benefit of the primary materials that Whiteman had at his disposal.¹³⁰ A poll of American Jewish historians in 1988 voted Leeser and Wise the "greatest" Jewish leaders of the nineteenth century.¹³¹ In 2022, the American Jewish Historical Society's journal, *American Jewish History*, devoted an entire issue to Leeser. The journal's editors had not planned to arrange the issue around him, however. "But in fact, Leeser's overarching presence in this issue is a happy accident," they explained. The next sentence betokens just how far Leeser had come: "It's also indicative of his unabated relevance for historians of American Jewish religion and culture."¹³² The Leeser letters have also been restored. In 2013, the University of Pennsylvania launched the Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leeser Digital Repository, under the leadership of Arthur Kiron.¹³³ To date, the digital archive possesses 2,092 entries.¹³⁴ Kiron, a librarian and curator at University of Pennsylvania, and a scholar of nineteenth-century Jewish Philadelphia, and his staff partnered with other libraries and collectors, most notably Arnold Kaplan, to restore the Dropsie collection, perhaps to the level that Emily Solis-Cohen had first encountered it when Adler directed his librarian to open the "large box in the vault of Leeser's papers" for her research back in 1930.

130 On post-Whiteman writing on Leeser, see Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, 246–247. For one of the lesser-known pieces by Korn that focuses on Leeser, see Bertram Wallace Korn, "Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh bi-Zeh," *Jewish Exponent* (12 March 1976): A5.

131 Benny Kraut, "American Jewish Leaders: The Great, Greater, and Greatest," *American Jewish History* 78 (December 1988): 201–236.

132 "A Note from the Editors," *American Jewish History* 106 (July 2022): vii.

133 Adam Mendelsohn, "Website Review," *Southern Jewish History* 17 (2014): 225–228.

134 Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leeser Digital Repository, Penn Libraries, <http://leeser.library.upenn.edu/>.

A Postscript

In 1983, Max Whiteman authored a final article on Leeser. He wrote that Leeser's "personal world was lonely, a mere handful of the laity supported him, and the clergy was unable to keep pace."¹³⁵ Whiteman died of a heart attack in May 1995 at the age of eighty-one. He had told a few friends that he was working on a biography of Leeser, which explains why he refused to provide Sussman with access to his personal collection of Leeser letters.¹³⁶ In his deposition, Whiteman claimed that he received letters from Emily Solis-Cohen, which would have derived from the Dropsie collection.

Upon his death, Whiteman was remembered less charitably than Leeser. One memoirist wrote that he was a "cantankerous chain-smoking, grudge-holding bantamweight who would fight for a principle until hell froze over." That same writer also noted that Whiteman was "among the nation's foremost scholars of early American Jewry. He was an expert on books and publishing, and was fluent in several languages."¹³⁷ His paper delivered before the American Jewish Historical Society was a watershed article on Leeser, and other essays by him popularized the work of the Philadelphia Group.¹³⁸ Another eulogist missed an opportunity to compare Whiteman and his favorite historical subject. "During his lifetime as the historian of the Jewish community of Philadelphia," wrote Murray Friedman, "he received little recognition. In part, this was due to his crusty personality."¹³⁹ Friedman addressed Whiteman's lack of academic degrees and alluded to his frustrations with employers. By comparison, Leeser was an unordained Jewish minister, an autodidact, who resented the overbearing oversight of Philadelphia's Congregation Mikveh Israel's trustees and was eventually fired by the lay leaders for

135 Maxwell Whiteman, "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940*, ed. Murray Friedman (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), 47.

136 Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, 295.

137 Avery, "Maxwell Whiteman," 20.

138 Jonathan D. Sarna, "Alternative to New York," *Commentary* 78 (October 1984): 74–76.

139 Murray Friedman, "Giant in Local Jewish History: Max Whiteman, in Memoriam," *Jewish Exponent* (9 June 1995): 27.

repudiating their authority over the synagogue. Despite a record of community organizing and public writing, Leeser suffered indignities and unfair insults hurled at him by Wise and other rabbinic elites.¹⁴⁰

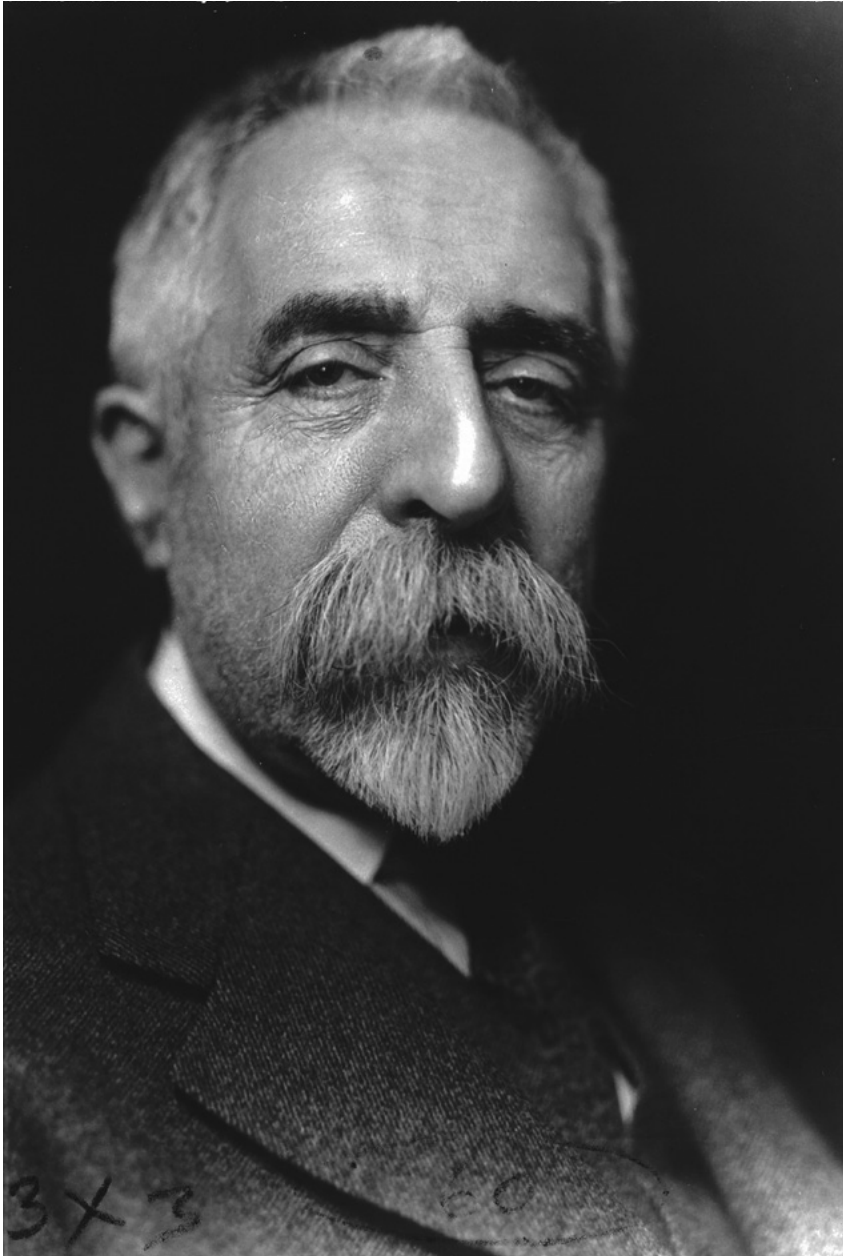
There are elements of memory-making and psychoanalysis in Whiteman's sad story. He never confessed to robbing Dropsie College, and it would be a case of conjecture to suppose that all the personal and professional parallels between Leeser and Whiteman somehow motivated the latter to steal Leeser's letters. This whole ordeal is not without peculiar precedents. In some respects, the Whiteman case mirrors the tragic life of Zosa Szajkowski, a Jewish historian who rescued Judaica from Nazi-occupied Europe. As the scholar Lisa Leff wrote, Szajkowski, underappreciated and underfunded, lost his way and stole documents from American repositories until he was caught at the New York Public Library.¹⁴¹ I will leave it to other, better trained psychologists to pontificate on Whiteman's motives.¹⁴² While his interests in Leeser were very different than Sulzberger (and other members of the Philadelphia Group), the desire of both to make meaning of Leeser's life and of the materials that could best attest to Leeser's legacy did much to revitalize attention paid to Leeser and transform him into a central figure in American Jewish history.

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140 Eleff, *Who Rules the Synagogue*, 37–41, 89.

141 Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

142 On this curious topic, see Zev Eleff, "Psychohistory and the Imaginary Couch: Diagnosing Historical and Biblical Figures," *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 80 (March 2012): 94–136.



Richard Gottheil
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Richard Gottheil's Role in the Great War: The Polemical Dogfights of a "Professor of Dead Languages"

ALLAN ARKUSH

The outbreak of World War I was as much of a shock to European Jewish leaders and intellectuals as it was to anyone else, but it did not leave them in a quandary. With a small number of notable exceptions, they lined up in support of their respective lands and participated in their war efforts, usually without reservation. This was true even of most Zionists, whose worldwide organization proclaimed its neutrality even as its members, scattered across the continent, donned different uniforms and suited up to fight one another.

In the United States, the situation was different—until April 1917, when the country belatedly entered the war. Before that its people stood outside the fray, generally heeding the admonition of its president to remain neutral in “thought as well as action.” By and large, American Jewry’s most notable figures did so for years, even though most of them tended to support the Central Powers, sometimes out of genuine sympathy but more often out of hatred of their enemy to the east, Tsarist Russia.

America’s Zionists for the most part shared these feelings, but not unanimously. Some of the thoroughly acculturated academics among them were, in the words of Ben Halpern, “inclined to share Anglophile, pro-Allied leanings” that prevailed among the East Coast elites. Among these people, however, Halpern identified a significant outlier. “Professor Richard Gottheil,” he wrote, “was particularly outspoken in supporting the Allied cause.”¹ During the war years, he often created something

1 Ben Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes: Brandeis, Weizmann and American Zionism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 154.

of a stir by issuing public statements pertaining to the Jewish and the American stakes in the fighting from a pro-Entente and anti-German point of view. He did not usually do so in his capacity as a high-ranking Zionist, but his identification with the Zionist movement strongly influenced others' perceptions of his words and their reaction to them. Many Zionists complained about what he was doing, but they could not stop him. At times, however, they may have succeeded in inducing him to act with a greater measure of caution. And after the United States entered the war, Gottheil was no longer out of step with anyone of consequence in the American Zionist movement or, for that matter, in the American Jewish community as a whole.

During the war, Gottheil was not a mover and a shaker. But he was a provocative and contentious figure who served as something of a lightning rod. An examination of his altercations with Zionist leaders like Judah Magnes and Harry Friedenwald, his critique of the great magnate Jacob Schiff, his attack on the Harvard professor Hugo Muensterberg, his letters to the *New York Times*, his denunciation of the Turkish government, his long-running battle with the pro-Zionist *American Jewish Chronicle*, and other episodes of his unique wartime career as a polemicist can shed a great deal of light, from an unusual perspective, on the evolution of American Jewry's attitudes toward World War I. And it can contribute to the biography of a half-forgotten but far from insignificant figure in American Jewish history, an outspoken man of principle, if not an adroit politician.

In and Out of Leadership

Richard Gottheil was an erudite and accomplished scholar, a professor of Semitics at Columbia University for half a century, from the 1880s to the 1930s, and a political leader as well, for a much shorter period, around the turn of the twentieth century. The range of his academic work was astonishingly broad, extending from antiquity to modern times, from ancient Persian to rabbinic to Muslim literature; like the authority of the book of Esther's King Ahasuerus, it stretched from India to Ethiopia and even a little bit further. His impressive bibliography is admittedly devoid of any work pertaining directly to the culture of India, but it does include studies relating to lands located

beyond it, including Tibet, as well as virtually all of the territory to the west, up to Ethiopia.² In fact, as his most thorough biographer notes, “when Ethiopia became the cynosure of the world’s interest in 1933–36, Professor Gottheil offered a course in the language and culture of Ethiopia at Columbia.”³

Gottheil’s political career was much narrower than his academic one. In 1898 he was the founding president of the Federation of American Zionists, a position he retained until 1904. As the head of America’s Zionists, he was not particularly effective. He did, however, earn Theodor Herzl’s trust and undertook a few remarkable initiatives. Perhaps the most colorful of them involved a collaboration with Herzl in 1901 and 1902 to obtain from the Remington company a magnificently appointed Arabic typewriter—apparently the first of its kind—and to dispatch it as a gift from the World Zionist Organization to Sultan Abdul Hamid in Constantinople.⁴ After his departure from office, however, it does not seem that Gottheil was greatly missed.

One of the fullest summaries of his political career comes from one of his successors as a leader of American Zionists, Louis Lipsky. It is not a positive one. “That Professor Richard Gottheil,” Lipsky writes, “should have been the first leader of an American Zionist organization is one of the curious incidents of early Zionist history. It was disconcerting that a student of dead languages should be called to lead the Zionist renaissance.” After he was induced to accept the presidency of the new federation, Lipsky reports,

he took the office with reluctance and did not alter his interests or his way of life because of it. He remained the student of books, the teacher of languages, leading a cloistered life from which he emerged from time to time to intervene indifferently in the practical aspects of Zionism.

2 Joshua Bloch and Ida A. Pratt, “Richard James Horatio Gottheil 1862–1936,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56, no. 4 (December 1936): 472–489.

3 Louis I. Newman, “Richard J. H. Gottheil: A Biographical Sketch,” *American Jewish Year Book* 39 (1937–1938): 36.

4 Evyatar Friesel, *HaTnua HaTziyonit BeArtzot HaBrit Be-Shanim, 1897–1914* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1970), 69.

Gottheil, Lipsky goes on to say, “hated to preside at meetings,” and “was careless in procedural matters and embarrassed by ceremonies in which he had to take part.” In addition, he

felt that his status as a professor was being sullied by his being President of a propaganda organization. He ran away from official duties. He usually limited his official addresses at Zionist meetings to the necessary items, speaking briefly. He became more and more nerve-provoked by his status, especially as the practical affairs of the Zionist Federation made no visible progress.

When his term of office ended in 1904, he “left at once for Europe and disappeared from the Zionist scene for good.”⁵

This was too harsh an assessment, one that ignored Gottheil’s significant contributions to American Zionism. As the Israeli scholar Zohar Segev recently wrote, when one closely examines his early Zionist writings, “it is hard to ignore the resemblance between Gottheil in 1900 and Louis Brandeis’s famous definition: “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews we must become Zionist.” What Gottheil wrote about how Zionism made its adherents better men years before Brandeis said much the same “adds another dimension to Brandeis’s view, showing that the roots of the special American view of Zionism go back to its earliest days. Already then, its founders felt that given the American reality, they had to adapt Herzl’s ideology to the needs of the Jewish community in the United States.”⁶ Even if Lipsky was correct in his assessment of Gottheil’s limitations, he went too far when he suggested that Gottheil disappeared from the Zionist scene for good. He may never again have attended a Zionist convention in the United States after 1904, as Lipsky says, but he did publish a pioneering history of Zionism in 1914.⁷ And he remained to some degree in the fray, as a result of his membership during

5 Louis Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), 211–214.

6 Zohar Segev, “European Zionism in the United States: The Americanization of Herzl’s Doctrine by American Zionist Leaders: Case Studies,” *Modern Judaism* 26, no. 3 (October 2006): 279.

7 Richard J. H. Gottheil, *Zionism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1914).

World War I in the Provisional Executive Committee of the Federation of American Zionists, and as a result of the various interventions in public discourse that we are now about to examine.

Taking on the Turks and Jacob Schiff

Turkey did not enter World War I until the end of October 1914, but within a month Gottheil had condemned it for joining the Central Powers. In an interview that appeared on the front page of the seventh section of the 29 November (Sunday) edition of the *New York Sun*, Gottheil first provided a capsule history of the Zionist movement, about which he had written at much greater length in his recently published book, and then outlined his position on the war, including his assessment of the Turks. He regretted most of all that they had been lured or duped into participating on “the wrong side”: “I say this not only as an American but also, and especially, as a Jew. For we Jews owe a great debt of gratitude to the two great democratic Powers of Western Europe which must render us eternally grateful to the liberal statesmanship with which they have been informed?”⁸

Gottheil proceeded to provide the *Sun*'s readers with a brief explanation of France's historical benevolence toward the Jews, one that begins, somewhat surprisingly, not with the French Revolution, which granted the country's Jews equal rights in 1791, but with the Sanhedrin that Napoleon convened sixteen years later. Historians today tend to highlight Napoleon's suspicions of the Jews and his coercive efforts to reform them.⁹ Gottheil, for his part, took no note of such things. For him, as a Jewish nationalist, they were apparently outweighed by the fact that Napoleon was “the first to recognize us as a body and by the calling of the Sanhedrin in 1807, to give us the dignity that such recognition demanded.”¹⁰ He saw this as a gesture that was more deserving of appreciation than the French National Assembly's earlier acknowledgment of Jews' equal rights as individuals. At the same time, however, he chose

8 *New York Sun*, 29 November 1914, section 7, p. 1.

9 See, e.g., Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul), 1979.

10 *New York Sun*, 29 November 1914, section 7, p. 1.

to highlight the fact that in France “no Jew has been denied the position that his ability and his merits have demanded as of right.” Knowing that such an assertion would call to his readers’ minds the Dreyfus affair, he hastened to dismiss the antisemitism it revealed as an importation from Germany.

Gottheil was briefer in his expression of enthusiastic appreciation of England, the land of his birth (to German-born parents, who would ultimately migrate to the United States). “Is it even needful to refer to England,” he asked,

where at the present day several of the highest posts in the gift of Government are held by men of my race and, I may add, without the slightest suspicion that in order to gain these posts they must show themselves recreant to their religious convictions or to their racial connections?¹¹

It is hard to see why Gottheil would have expected the Turks to throw in their lot with the Allies for these particular reasons. He argued, however, rather loosely, that, in view of these countries’ generous treatment of the Jews, the Turks ought to see that France and England “would have an understanding for the peculiar questions that confront the Government at the Golden Horn, for the multiplicity of the national and religious entities that demand recognition and the free play of their national consciences within the wide reach of Turkish dominion.”

Unfortunately, the Turks failed to realize what would be in their own best interests and placed themselves “unreservedly under the heel of the Prussian boot.” They did so no doubt because they anticipated a German victory, but if they only looked at the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine and considered the fate of the Poles, they would understand what negative consequences these aspects might very well imply for them. And, as far as the Jews were concerned, matters were even clearer:

What are we Jews to expect from a Prussianization of Turkey and a Junkerization of Palestine? Is the anti-Semitism born this side of the Russian border to be part and parcel of the new order of things

11 *New York Sun*, 29 November 1914, section 7, p. 1.

hoped for? Are Jews in order to take part and share in the new Turkey to be forced to the baptismal font or perhaps to a repetition of the Mohammedan Shehadah, or confession of faith?¹²

Gottheil was not wrong to fear an Ottoman crackdown on Jewish Palestine. One was already underway as he wrote, although it was focused on the removal of the Zionists from the country, not their conversion to Islam. What he could not see at the moment, however, was how effectively the German government would soon intervene with its Ottoman ally in defense of Zionist interests and bring the crackdown to a halt.¹³

Since the Germans have nothing to offer, Gottheil wrote, “we Jews can profit only by the spread of the spirit that has informed the liberal statesmanship of France and England. This is true both in the lands of the Dispersion and in our home country Palestine.” But Gottheil did not stop there. He bent over backwards to rope the most dubious of the Allies into the circle of respectability: Russia. Gottheil expressed the pious hope that the beneficial influence of France and England would extend eastward “to the land of the Czar in order that the suspicion that has been attached to his Jewish subjects, largely under the influence of the Prussian Junkerdom that has crossed the border into Russia” shall weaken.¹⁴ Too optimistically, he viewed the enlistment of a quarter of a million Jewish soldiers in the Russian Army as a sign that this was beginning to happen.¹⁵ After this excursus on the war, Gottheil returned, at the end of the interview, to the subject of Zionism.

Among the people displeased by Gottheil’s interview in the *Sun* was Harry Friedenwald, one of the leading figures in the Federation of American Zionists and a fellow member of its Provisional Executive Committee. “I felt badly,” he wrote to Gottheil on 1 December 1914, “at your giving expression to your very decidedly pro-Ally views and

12 *New York Sun*, 29 November 1914, Section 7, p. 1.

13 Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897–1918* (New York: Transaction, 1997), 191–227.

14 *New York Sun*, 29 November 1914, Section 7, p. 1.

15 He was far from the only person to do so; see Marc Saperstein, “Western Perceptions of Russian Jews at the Beginning of the First World War,” *European Judaism* 43, no. 1 (2010): 116–127.

anti-German sentiments. It appears to me essential that the small group of persons who are guiding the provisional Zionist work should maintain the strictest neutrality in their public utterances, especially when they are dealing with Zionist questions!" Friedenwald concluded his note with a friendly warning that he was going to call this matter to the attention of other members of the committee.¹⁶ Magnes, who also belonged to the committee and was one of the leading figures in the New York Jewish community, was similarly upset with Gottheil.¹⁷ The new leader of American Zionism, Louis Brandeis, consequently "had to find a way to restrain his partisanship, at least when shown in a Zionist context, and yet soothe his ruffled feelings when other Zionists (such as the emphatically anti-war Magnes) tried to administer an official rebuke."¹⁸ But no such rebuke was delivered.

It seems as if Gottheil may have taken these criticisms and manifestations of disapproval to heart.¹⁹ His next public statement on the war

16 Letter from Harry Friedenwald to Richard Gottheil, 1 December 1914, Friedenwald MSS, A 182/89, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

17 Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl to the Holocaust* (New York: Anchor, 1975), 198. "I think that it is absolutely necessary," Magnes wrote to Brandeis on 7 December 1914, "for our committee or any Committee in America that expects to make its voice heard in peace negotiations to act as an absolutely neutral committee. It is not enough for us to be able to say when the time comes that as a Committee we have committed no breach of neutrality. We must be able to say that the individual members of our Committee have not given public expression to their individual views. Dr. Gottheil, while appreciating these sentiments, was not inclined to be in agreement with them." Richard Gottheil Papers, MS-127, box 1, folder 5, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).

18 Halpern, *Clash*, 154. Later, in June 1915, the Turkish consul-general in New York complained to the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Oscar Strauss, about Gottheil and others who had been making pro-Entente statements. See Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 245.

19 But Magnes did not give up easily. Six months later he was still prepared to urge Brandeis to remove Gottheil from the Provisional Executive Committee. On 24 May 1915, he sent Brandeis a clipping from that day's *New York Times*. The newspaper reported that Gottheil had denounced the German government's conduct in Palestine at a meeting of the American branch of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. He "attacked the doings of a German Jewish society which, he said, established a 'Technicum' in

retained anti-German overtones, but it studiously avoided any overt partisanship. It was, however, notably critical of one American Jew of German origin, who only a week before Gottheil's interview in the *Sun* had himself given an interview to the *New York Times* in which he had expressed his sympathy with Germany: Jacob Schiff.

Born in Germany but long established in the United States, Schiff had a better claim than anyone else to be considered the leading Jew in his adopted land. An enormously wealthy banker at Kuhn, Loeb & Co., he was a zealous activist and philanthropist, the guiding spirit behind a host of different initiatives and organizations.²⁰ In the *New York Times* on 22 November 1914, Schiff made it clear from the outset that, even though he was an American "in every fibre" of his being, he nevertheless did not share what seemed to be the prevailing opinion of his fellow citizens that Germany was responsible for the war taking place in Europe. He was admittedly biased. "For many reasons," he said, "my personal sympathies are with Germany." She was not the real aggressor; war had been forced on her, he maintained. But even if this had not been the case, it seems, he could not have done anything other than stand up for his native land. "Although I left Germany half a century ago, I would think as little of arraying myself against her, the country

Jaffa, Palestine, to compete with and undermine the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose headquarters are in Paris, though it is not French in nature or in purpose. The German society, Dr. Gottheil said, inspired by the Imperial Government, first collected funds from Jews all over the world to establish the Technicum, with the Hebrew language as the vernacular, then, when it was built, endeavored to substitute German. "The storm of protest that this aroused not only exceeded any preceding wave of emotion sweeping our people throughout the world," he said, "but it did much to unite them." Gottheil's words, according to Magnes, constituted a "breach of the understanding that we had in the Provisional Committee that the Committee should preserve strict neutrality in their public utterances as to the European war, particularly when related to Jewish affairs." Magnes advised Brandeis that Gottheil should be asked to resign from the Committee and threatened to withdraw from it himself if he was not. Richard Gottheil Papers, MS-127, box 1, folder 5, AJA. Magnes did resign from the Committee the following month, but for weightier reasons, see Daniel P. Kotzkin, *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Nonconformist* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 133–137.

20 Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999).

of my birth, in this moment of her struggle for existence, as of arraying myself against my parents.”

Schiff did not expect the readers of the *New York Times* to share his feelings or to come to Germany's aid. He proceeded with a dispassionate analysis of the world situation, in which he endeavored not simply to justify Germany's actions but to outline what Americans, whether they shared his sentiments or not, ought to recognize as their own country's interest in preventing Germany from being utterly defeated by the Entente. If that were to happen, it would lead, Schiff warned, to England's domination of Europe. Then “every nation in the world would have to do the British bidding, for, should anyone refuse, she could completely destroy its commerce and shut off its overseas supplies.”

But it was not only Britain that should be barred from attaining world domination. If things were to go the other way, and its main adversary were to come out on top, “in the role of a world conqueror Germany would become a world dictator—would indulge in a domination which would be almost unbearable in every other nation. Particularly would this be the case in respect to her relations with the United States,” since it would be only a matter of time before Germany began meddling in the Western Hemisphere. What is the answer, then? Stop the fighting now! The American press and the American people should do whatever was within their power to bring about an end to the conflagration and restore a world in which all of the pitfalls that Schiff foresaw would be avoided and “peaceful competition” would prevail.

In this entire long interview Schiff alluded only once to his Jewishness. “I am anti-Russian,” he noted in passing, “for reasons that are obvious.” They were, of course, to people who knew of his Jewish commitments, which probably included all readers of the *New York Times* in the fall of 1914.²¹ A few months later, however, in a Jewish periodical, the newly created *Menorah Journal*, Schiff was more explicit and outlined what the current world situation looked like from a Jewish perspective. In an

21 Edward Marshall, “Jacob H. Schiff Points a Way to European Peace,” *New York Times* (22 November 1914): 4.

article entitled “The Jewish Problem Today,” he explained at the very outset just why he was anti-Russian. He admitted, once again, that he was a German sympathizer but rejected the idea that he was therefore biased. Regardless of his feelings, “the fact is” that the Jewish people in the eastern war zone “have been outraged in the most terrible manner” by the Russians and the Poles, who have treated them inhumanely.²²

Schiff did not go into the gory details as he could have, if he thought that readers of the *Menorah Journal* needed to hear them. By the time he was writing, however, the *New York Times* and other papers had already revealed all that needed to be known of what was taking place in the areas under the control of the Russian Army.²³ Nor did he call upon the Jewish press and the Jewish people to campaign actively for immediate action to remedy the situation faced by their brethren in Eastern Europe. In the long run, he said, “the only way to solve the Jewish problem in Russia...is nothing less than the entire removal of the Pale.” In the short run, little improvement could be expected. Speaking from experience (but only alluding to it indirectly), Schiff discounted the possibility that the Russian government could be moved to take positive action.²⁴ What America and America’s Jews should do is therefore “hard to say.” But Schiff did have a positive proposal. “I do not think that there is anything to do now for the Jews and Jewish bodies except to work harmoniously together in the raising of relief funds.”²⁵

For a German sympathizer, Schiff remained reserved in his expressions of approbation for his native land until he reached the middle of his essay, where he compared England unfavorably with it. England, he wrote,

has been contaminated by her alliance with Russia, because England doesn’t want to do anything that is displeasing to her ally, more through fear to offend her than through respect for her. So far, at least, it has not

22 Jacob H. Schiff, “The Jewish Problem Today,” *Menorah Journal* 1, no. 2 (1915): 75.

23 Sarah Panter, “Neutral Spectators from a Distance? American Jews and the Outbreak of the First World War,” *Religions* 9, no. 7 (2018): 6.

24 Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff*, 124–152.

25 Schiff, “Jewish Problem,” 76.

come true, as it was hoped in certain quarters, that England might apply pressure upon Russia to obtain an improvement in the condition of the Jews. And unfortunately the conditions in England itself affecting the Jews are certainly not as good now as they have been formerly. England has always been our great friend. In England there existed no such thing as anti-Semitism. But now there are, I fear, signs of a change.

That there was no trace of antisemitism in England prior to the outbreak of World War I is a less than accurate assertion. And Schiff's insinuation that antisemitism was seeping into the country from its Russian ally lacked any foundation.²⁶ But what he went on to say about Germany was even more dubious.

In Germany the Jews do not suffer. They have a high standing and occupy many positions. There has, it is true, always been a certain anti-Semitic tendency in Germany. But I think this war will crush out most of that, in fact all classes of difference. I am quite convinced that anti-Semitism in Germany is a thing of the past.²⁷

Needless to say, Schiff's statements ring hollow today. But they were already unfounded when they were still fresh, in 1915, and they got under Gottheil's skin even then. They may very well have been what provoked him to publish his article, "The War from a Jewish Standpoint," in the very next issue of the *Menorah Journal*, even though he reserved his response to Schiff for a footnote.²⁸

In this footnote, Gottheil disputed the very idea that antisemitism was on the rise in England, although he did acknowledge that some

26 If antisemitism did indeed increase in England in the course of the war, it was mostly due to the widely known reluctance of young Russian Jews residing in the country to service in the war; see Julia Bush, "East London Jews and the First World War," *London Journal* 6, no. 2 (1980): 147–161.

27 Schiff, "Jewish Problem," 77.

28 This footnote represents a briefer and somewhat less pugnacious recapitulation of a letter that Gottheil addressed to the *Times* after it published, on 1 May 1915, some excerpts from Schiff's *Menorah Journal* article. A copy of the letter, which may or may not have been sent but was certainly not published, is in the Richard Gottheil Papers, MS-127, box 1, folder 2, AJA.

bankers of German-Jewish origin “and their following” had recently aroused public mistrust there. But whatever ill will was being directed against them, he insisted, had nothing to do with their Jewish origin. “Most of them have never taken the least interest in Jewish affairs, some even have ostentatiously kept themselves quite apart from any connection with them. And what is more, the feeling against them is shared by Jews as well as by non-Jews in England.”²⁹

The aspersions Schiff cast on England seem to disturb Gottheil less than the excuses he made for Germany. Gottheil scoffs at his sugar-coating of the scene there, insisting that antisemitism is far more than a mere tendency. “Anti-Semitism in Germany,” he objects, “and especially in Prussia, has kept the Jews far from any positions of importance in university life, on the bench, and in all state and military affairs.” Schiff’s idea that the war will “crush out” most of the remaining antisemitism is a fantasy that flies in the face of the known facts.

Nor can Mr. Schiff forget that forced conversion away from the Jewish faith and communion has nowhere taken on the dangerous proportions it has in the Fatherland. Russia, it is true, has martyred many Jewish bodies; German “Kultur” has quenched too many Jewish souls. History will have to decide which has done greater hurt to the Jewish cause.³⁰

29 Richard Gottheil, “The War from a Jewish Standpoint,” *Menorah Journal* 1, no. 3 (June 1915): 153.

30 Gottheil did not have access to a personal letter from Schiff to Arthur Zimmerman, undersecretary in the German Foreign Office (and, after his promotion and in time, the author of the famous telegram) in which Schiff was more candid about German antisemitism: “The sympathies of a majority of American Jews,” he wrote, “who are in the main of Russian origin, decidedly are on the side of Germany, but I cannot but state that a great number of Jews, especially born in this country, whose parents came here from Germany many years ago, do not completely share this sympathy, because the members of this young generation, very much convinced of their human dignity, cannot forget that Germany has been the breeding ground of anti-Semitism and that this irresponsible movement has spread out further from Germany.” The letter is quoted in Reinhard R. Doerries, *Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernstorff and German-American Relations, 1908–1917*, trans. Christa D. Shannon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 65.

There is no need to emphasize how ironic these words sound today, long after the Germans succeeded in outdoing the Russians in the destruction of Jewish bodies, and after seven decades in which Russia concentrated on quenching Jewish souls. Let us take note, instead, of their tone. It is so sharp in its rebuke of the leading figure in American Jewry at the time that one cannot help but wonder whether there is a personal backstory to uncover here. Of such a thing I have found no direct evidence. It is hard to believe that Gottheil and Schiff never crossed paths, but the existing (and rather brief) biographical studies of the former make no mention of the latter. Nor does Gottheil show up in any of the biographies of Schiff, including the sizeable and relatively recent one by Naomi Cohen.

But elsewhere, in her *Encounter with Emancipation*, Cohen provides a biographical sketch of Gottheil that may shed some light on this question. Exploring the basis for his early commitment to Zionism, she considers the impact of his family background. She notes, to begin with, the fact that his German-born father, Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, was himself an early convert to Zionism and one of the few Reform rabbis of his day who fell into this category. Rabbi Gottheil had served for some years at a congregation in Manchester, England (where Richard was born), before coming to New York City, where he became the rabbi of Temple Emanu-el in New York City. Cohen suspects that as a youngster Richard may have observed and deeply resented the crass treatment meted out to rabbis by the “vulgar rich of whom Temple Emanu-el doubtless had its share.” Indeed, later in life, he “seized numerous occasions to retaliate against the ‘well-fed dwellers in our golden ghettos’ who supported synagogues, choirs, and ‘staid church deportment.’ Lulled by their material comfort (whose level he and his father never approximated) into a mood of false security, they were insensitive to ‘kicks and hurts.’ He saw them as harbingers of the destruction of Judaism.”

Cohen conjectures that “Zionist affiliation was Richard’s way of declaring his independence of those circles and yet remaining loyal to his

father.”³¹ If this was indeed what the younger Gottheil was doing, these feelings may have colored his relationship with Schiff, who was one of the pillars of Temple Emanu-el. No one could dismiss this august patrician as a vulgarian, but who knows what distorted recollections from his childhood might have become lodged in Gottheil’s imagination and inspired him to lash out at him?

In the latter part of his essay, Gottheil, like Schiff before him, focused on the situation in Eastern Europe. There, he noted, “in Poland, in Galicia, and in parts of Russia, at least two or three millions of Jews have suffered from the ravages of a war waged with a bitterness that exceeds all bounds.” Unlike Schiff, however, Gottheil did not express outrage against the Russians, nor did he reinforce Schiff’s urgent call for the extension of assistance to their victims. He despaired, like Schiff, of any possibility for immediate, structural change and focused on the aftermath of the war, but he did so with considerably more optimism. Encouraged by some recent expressions on the part of members of “the most intelligent portion of the Russian population” for “the disappearance of all kinds of persecution of the Jews and their complete emancipation,” he predicted a better future, particularly since he differed with Schiff with respect to the direction in which cross-border influence was flowing.

And we are the more persuaded that these [pro-Jewish] views will prevail when we remember that [during the war] Russia has been brought into closer contact with just those nations of Europe where Jewish emancipation has been most perfect and has brought forth the best fruits. It is unthinkable that these nations should fail to put their influence on the side of Jewish freedom in Russia when European accounts are finally balanced.

Gottheil went into more detail than Schiff about the situation in Romania and, of course, in his capacity as a lifelong Zionist, the future of Palestine. The most significant difference between his essay and

31 Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 287.

Schiff's, however, had to do not with Jewish issues in particular but with matters of great global import. "Our concern," he wrote, "in the present world conflict goes further than our own immediate affairs and meets those interests which we have in common with the rest of humankind." Schiff, too, as we have seen, expressed such concerns in his *Times* interview when he shared his geopolitical worries about one side or the other obtaining global dominion. Gottheil's reflections were, in contrast, purely moralistic and more opposed to war itself than they were supportive of any belligerent power.

Gottheil's words bear the imprint, to be sure, of an essentially anti-German outlook. There is, to begin with, his reference on the second page to the sufferings of the Belgian people (although without any explicit mention of the fact that Germany was responsible for them). His later lament over the collapse during wartime of the structure of international law seems, in context, to point principally to Germany's violation of Belgium's neutrality and its initiation of the use of poison gas in combat. But where he seems most clearly to be thinking anti-German thoughts is in his outline of the intellectual genealogy of the outlook currently prevailing in the world. The first thinker he blames for this lamentable state of affairs is Martin Luther, who described war as a "divine business." The other villains include Heinrich von Treitschke, Hans Delbrueck, and above all, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose consecration of the "will to power" had led to "a glorification of war as the supreme test of strength, obtaining its justification in success."³²

This all has a very familiar ring to it. As Nicholas Martin has observed, the "opening salvos of the British propaganda offensive" in World War I

included numerous books and articles which sought to establish how Nietzsche had fueled, if not created, the Germans' supposed love of killing and conquest. In works with improbable titles such as *Fighting a Philosophy* or *Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Power in Modern Germany* or *Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany*, British propagandists accused Nietzsche, who had died in 1900, of leading a posthumous

32 Gottheil, "War," 156–157.

conspiracy with his “followers,” the historian Heinrich von Treitschke (dead since 1896) and the ageing military strategist General Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849–1930), to foster a mood of aggressive imperialism in Germany.³³

Gottheil, for his part, had nothing at all to say against Bernhardi, but, much more significantly, he did not, in the end, stigmatize the Germans in particular. Whatever the origins of the new bellicosity, it was now manifest in England as well. In proof of this, he cited a September 1914 article from the British periodical *Nineteenth Century* in which the unnamed but religious-minded author spoke of the test of war as “the test which God has given for the trial of people.” No one should think, this man said, that “Christianity is incompatible with the military spirit.” For only “a spurious and bastard humanitarianism masquerading as religion declares war to be an anachronism and a barbaric sin.”

Gottheil might at this point have scoured England or even the rest of the world for signs of a more salubrious mentality, but he identified, in the end, only one countervailing force: Judaism. On the basis of some brief citations from the Torah, the prophets, and the rabbis, he arrived at the conclusion that the “ideal of peace has been the guiding star of Israel for which the Jew has prayed morning, noon and night.” His readers, he hoped, “the young men of the Menorah,” would do their part in “upholding the reign of law, the reign of love, and the reign of peace.” Gottheil seems, for the moment, to have been tamed.³⁴ Unlike his ardently pro-Allies remarks the year before, Gottheil’s “The War from a Jewish Standpoint” should have been unobjectionable to Friedenwald and probably would have found favor even in the eyes of Magnes, the pacifist who took umbrage at what he had then said. But Gottheil was not denouncing the very idea of participating in the Great War. He was just keeping his distance from it.

33 Nicholas Martin, “Fighting a Philosophy: The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda of the First World War,” *Modern Language Review* 98, no. 2 (April 2003): 368.

34 Perhaps the editors of the *Menorah Journal*, who during these years generally kept their pages closed to ruminations about the war, had a part in this.

Professor versus Professor

No sequel to Gottheil's essay appeared in the *Menorah Journal*, and neither Schiff nor anyone else replied to it elsewhere, as far as I have been able to determine. It was not until the following year that Gottheil himself made another public statement pertaining to the war. In this case it was not a short essay but a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* directed against a piece that had been published in the *Times Magazine* on 30 July 1916. Its author, Professor Hugo Muensterberg of Harvard University, was a longtime German resident of the United States and a figure of considerable prominence who had long made it his goal to facilitate mutual understanding among Germans and Americans, a project beset with ever greater difficulties after World War I began. Gottheil sought to make it even harder for him.

Muensterberg and Gottheil had a lot in common, and even more that divided them. Both were born in the early 1860s, less than a year apart, and both became professors at Ivy League universities in their thirties. Muensterberg was, to be sure, far closer to the pinnacle of contemporary American academy, as a close associate of William James, who brought him to Harvard "and had his own title changed from 'Professor of Psychology' to 'professor of philosophy' to enable his German colleague to become the exponent of the new (experimental) psychology" there.³⁵ But Gottheil's reputation was still a formidable one.

35 Jutta Spillman and Lothar Spillman, "The Rise and Fall of Hugo Muensterberg," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 29 (October 1993): 325. Muensterberg had an extraordinary career. After succeeding William James as professor of psychology at Harvard, he "had a long-lasting influence on the development of psychology in the United States." In 1898, "he was elected President of the American Psychological Association and ten years later, President of the American Philosophical Association" (326). His book *On the Witness Stand* "marked the beginning of forensic psychology in the United States, showing that there could be great differences between eyewitness testimony and objective truth" (329–30). Among many other things, he played a pioneering role in the application of psychology to industrial life. The onset of war changed everything, however. As Muensterberg acquired the reputation of being an apologist for Germany, he became a virtual outcast at Harvard. See Phyllis Keller, *States of Belonging: German-American Intellectuals and the First World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 68–115.

Both Muensterberg and Gottheil became involved in political pursuits beyond the boundaries of their universities, and while doing so each of them stressed the possibility of combining one's original ethnic identity with full-fledged American citizenship. Gottheil did this, as we have seen, from a Zionist standpoint; Muensterberg did something similar for German-Americans. "No German-American lives up to his responsibilities," he wrote, "if he does not try to bring the very best traits of the land of his ancestors as his peculiar contribution to the young nation of the new world. But this is possible only if he never forgets that he is of German descent."³⁶

What Muensterberg himself did wish to forget, utterly unlike Gottheil, was that he was of Jewish descent, too. While his father, Moritz Minsterberg, was a leader of one of the Jewish congregations in Danzig, he himself had become estranged from the religion in which he had been raised, which at a number of points seems to have stood in the way of his career advancement.³⁷ After his parents died, he converted to Lutheranism, without any apparent regrets and without maintaining any residual loyalty to the Jewish people. Much as he might have wished to bury any traces of his Jewish origin, it remained well enough known, even at Harvard. This is reflected in one of the denunciations heaped upon him at the university on account of his vocal support for Germany during the early days of World War I. While most of his local critics were content to accuse Muensterberg of wrong-headedness and immorality, William Roscoe Thayer, a member of Harvard's Board of Overseers, railed against the publicity-seeking of "the Prussianized renegade Jew."³⁸

Muensterberg had already been busy making enemies at Harvard for two years when his article "The Allies of the Future: A Meditation on the Second Anniversary of the Beginning of the Great War in Europe" appeared in the *Times*. It was a piece slightly reminiscent of Schiff's 1914 *Times* interview insofar as it expressed concern about what the postwar world might look like. The basic contours of world politics, Muensterberg foresaw, would in the future be determined by the rivalry

36 Hugo Münsterberg, *The War and America* (New York: D. Appleton, 1915), 51.

37 Keller, *States*, 16.

38 Keller, *States*, 78.

between Great Britain and Russia. Which of these powers would prevail would depend on Germany. If it joined with Russia, as well as Austria, Turkey, and Japan, a "tremendous alliance" capable of "incalculable harm" would be ranged against England. The result would be a "superwar" in which "Europe would be devastated, for the first time Asia would tremble, and America would be drenched with blood." The only way to avoid this frightening prospect would be for Germany "to join not Russia, but England." And America could not remain isolated. Facing the threat of Japan, it would have to join the British-German alliance and thereby render it "invincible." The time to start building this tripartite force, according to Muensterberg, was now, in the midst of the current war. The president of the United States must do his best to serve as a mediator between the warring parties, with the aim of creating an alliance that would bind together "the three Teutonic master nations" and "bring to the war-ridden world the glories of peace for ages and ages hereafter."

Muensterberg knew that two years of bitter fighting had produced a great deal of ill will that would have to be overcome before such an alliance could be constituted. To help make this possible, he urged everyone to realize that the current war was the fault of no nation in particular, and he minimized the actual damage that had been done, both to the international order and to humanity. In Belgium and elsewhere, he acknowledged, treaties had been ignored, but there were usually good reasons for that. Many mistakes were made in the course of the fighting. "No one can wonder," therefore, "that in the heat of the struggle those blunders, when they did harm, were denounced as moral wrongs, that every unintentional homicide was branded as murder." These misconceptions were understandable, but, if things were seen in the proper perspective, the old hatreds could become "the nightmare of yesterday."³⁹

In a letter to the editor of the *Times* datelined Woods Hole, Massachusetts, 22 August 1916, and presumably written from somewhere near the beach, Gottheil first disputed some of what Muensterberg

39 Hugo Münsterberg, "The Allies of the Future," *New York Times Magazine* (30 July 1916): 1.

said concerning the circumstances leading up to the current war. He proceeded to accuse him of trying “to sow the seeds of disunion between Great Britain and Russia.” Then he got to what was, for him, the heart of the matter. Germany, he insisted, did bear responsibility for the war and for its worst excesses. “It is quite evident,” therefore, that before it “can be readmitted into the comity of nations some reparation—spiritual and other—must be made for the violent rending of the moral conscience of the world by those who have been and are leading her policies of war and destruction.” Gottheil ridiculed Muensterberg’s reference to “unintentional homicides” as nothing more than an effort “to cover many events with the mantle of silence.” The world, he said, “cannot forget the savagery of German ‘Kultur’ in Belgium” or a host of other German offenses and crimes. There can be no talk, Gottheil insisted, of a “Teutonic alliance” of the kind Muensterberg had in mind “until the manifest faults of Germany are admitted.”⁴⁰

Gottheil’s derogatory recourse to the word *Kultur* in this context is reminiscent of his use of the same word in his response to Schiff in the footnote to his *Menorah Journal* essay, where he lamented the fact that German “Kultur” had “quenched” too many Jewish souls. He must have known that Muensterberg was one of these souls, even though he made no reference to this fact (understandably enough) in his letter to the editor of the *Times*. His hostility to Muensterberg surely does not stem from the fact that he was a “renegade Jew,” but it could only have been enhanced by it.

Muensterberg, for his part, does not seem to have responded to Gottheil in any way. But he did not have much time to do so. After its

40 Gottheil refrained from spelling out in his letter to the *Times*, or in any other publication, all of his fears with regard to Germany. He did so, however, in an 29 April 1916 letter to Stephen S. Wise: “I am afraid you have no conception as yet of what is going on in Germany and Austria,” he told Wise, and then went on to outline the vast range of Germany’s ambitions. It aimed, he maintained, at nothing less than “world dominion.” He concluded his letter with a rather severe admonition. “It is for you ‘peace at any price’ men to look these facts straight in the face.... We, in America, stand in between Prussian oppression over-dominion in the whole world and the rights of the separate nations to live their own political and economic lives.” Stephen S. Wise Papers, MS-49, box 3, folder 3, AJA.

publication, he had only four months to live. From another quarter, however, Gottheil was subjected to lacerating criticism on account of his rebuke of Muensterberg, as well as other things he had said that were at variance with the interests of the Central Powers.

“The Case against Richard Gottheil”

On 1 September 1916 the Zionist-oriented *American Jewish Chronicle*, angered by Gottheil’s letter to the *Times*, criticized him for writing “an inciting article against the Central Powers who now shelter 5,000,000 Jews” that was inconsistent with Zionist neutrality.

Richard Gottheil may have a perfect right to bring his unneutral opinion before the American public and to take pleasure in his work for Russia, but he should be made to leave the Zionist organization as soon as possible.

We suggest that the leaders of American Zionism take steps without delay to have Professor Gottheil resign from the Provisional Committee of General Zionist Affairs. This should be done before the Professor has a chance to do more harm. In doing this they will re-establish the complete neutrality which marks the acts of the Zionist organization.⁴¹

The *Chronicle* was concerned, however, with much more than keeping the Zionist organization out of the fray. The weekly paper had been founded in 1916 by Isaac Straus and was edited by the Russian-born S. M. Melamed, who were both affiliated with the German-Jewish Committee for the East, an ad hoc body led by prominent German Zionists that actively promoted the German cause in occupied Russian territory. Straus had been sent to the United States in September 1914 to direct propaganda work among Jews for the German Information Bureau in New York, and “to win over public opinion of American Jews for the Central Powers.”⁴² The German government apparently supplied

41 “The Case Against Richard Gottheil,” *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 17 (1 September 1916): 516.

42 Joseph Rappaport, “The American Yiddish Press and the European Conflict in 1914,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 19, nos 3–4 (July–October 1957): 118. See also Doerries, *Imperial Challenge*, 59–60, 271n117.

him with very substantial funding.⁴³

The *Chronicle's* critical response to Gottheil's attack on Muensterberg appeared in the midst of its longer and more sustained campaign against Gottheil on account of some other things that he had reportedly said, not in the course of the summer of 1916 in a letter to an American newspaper but months earlier in a conversation with a Russian conservative writer that had only recently been published in a paper based in Moscow.

Sergei Nikolaievich Syromiatnikov was a journalist and political thinker who at times maintained very close relations with the Czarist government. He

always remained a supporter of the autocracy, but he considered himself to be a “progressive nationalist,” the champion of “true, state conservatism” aimed at “the preservation of all that is alive and viable in our people,” “the development of what is historically necessary,” and “the defense of our time-proven ways against the untested alien ways through the education of thoughts and sentiments.”

The outbreak of World War I turned Syromiatnikov into “a champion of Russia's rapprochement with England and the United States to counterbalance the German Empire.”⁴⁴

In early 1915, the Russian Interior Ministry sent Syromiatnikov to the United States (on the one of the last voyages of the *Lusitania*, as it turns out) to promote a better understanding of Russia among the American public. The hope was that he would soften hostility toward the country's autocratic regime and thereby remove an obstacle to American

43 Zosa Szejakowski, *The Attitude of American Jews to World War I, the Russian Revolutions of 1917, and Communism (1914–1945)*, vol. 1 of *Jews, Wars, and Communism* (New York: Ktav, 1972), 39.

44 Victoria I. Zhuravleva, “Rethinking Russia in the United States during the First World War: Mr. Sigma's American Voyage,” in *New Perspectives on Russian-American Relations*, ed. William Benton Whisenhunt and Norman E. Saul (New York: Routledge, 1915), 145.

support for the Entente.⁴⁵ Interestingly enough, but in a way that goes beyond the scope of this article, Syromiatnikov helped to lay the ground for Russian studies in the United States during his year in this country, particularly at Columbia University. Whether he encountered Gottheil in connection with this enterprise is unclear. But he definitely did what he could to counteract ubiquitous reports of the Russian military's abuses of Jews in the eastern war zone. He "insisted that they were limited to the Jewish spies that collaborated with Germany and that they bore no comparison to the violence that Germany had unleashed toward both Jews and Christians."⁴⁶

In contentious debate on this subject with American Jewish adversaries, Syromiatnikov eventually slipped from slander into rank anti-semitism. In a piece in the *New York Tribune* he uttered the following complaint:

But the Jewish agitation in the United States press and society endangers not only the fate of the Jews in Russia, but imperils the possibility of a better understanding between the great republic and the great empire, because it suggests to the Russian statesmen the wrong idea that the United States has no policy of its own, no government of its own, and that it is preferable and more efficient to treat with the Alliance Israelite than with the government at Washington regarding American affairs.

The Russian ambassador to the United States understood that this was counterproductive and, partly on account of this statement, arranged for Syromiatnikov to be recalled.⁴⁷

Months after he had returned to his own country, Syromiatnikov published in an antisemitic Russian newspaper an interview he had held with Gottheil back in the United States. In its 28 July 1916 issue, the *American Jewish Chronicle* quoted this article beneath the headline: "Professor Gottheil Against Russian Jews: American 'Zionist leader' Reported By Anti-Semitic Editor To Approve Anti-Jewish Tactics." Gottheil is said to have told "the anti-Semitic Russian journalist that

45 Zhuravleva, "Rethinking," 146.

46 Zhuravleva, "Rethinking," 149.

47 Zhuravleva, "Rethinking," 153.

Russia could not ameliorate the condition of her Jews during the war. He prefers a gradual and fundamental solution to a radical one.” But that was not the worst of it. “*Gottheil advised me, Mr. Syromiatnikoff asserts, that the anti-Russian attitude in America was held by the Jewish revolutionists and socialists, and he told me not to pay any attention to them since influential Jewish circles pay no attention to them either*” (italic in the original).⁴⁸

In the eyes of the *Chronicle's* Russian correspondent, it was incredible that a Zionist, much less a Jew, could have had said such things. But if he indeed had done so, he wrote, as seemed to be the case, “we have before us a clear case of high treason against the Jewish nation. These words are a betrayal of all the efforts made by American Jewry to better the lot of the suffering and persecuted Russian Jews by characterizing them as revolutionaries and socialists.” The *Chronicle's* editors amplified these criticisms, berating Gottheil in similar language and going so far as to assert that his dismissal of American Jews as subversives was tantamount to encouragement of the Russian government's policy of pogroms. Unfortunately, they wrote, “Richard Gottheil is spoken of as an American Jewish leader.” He should not be. “American Jewry will have to see to it that such leaders are dethroned as quickly as possible.”⁴⁹

A month later, on 25 August, the *Chronicle* published another editorial prosecuting “The Case Against Richard Gottheil.” It seems to have been triggered by the newspaper's receipt of a letter from an unnamed friend of Gottheil requesting that it notify its readers that Gottheil himself denied the accuracy of Syromiatnikov's reports. “We thereupon suggested,” reported the *Chronicle*, “that Professor Gottheil should publish what he actually said in the several interviews” he had with the Russian. His refusal to do so, however, was perhaps the least of the sins the *Chronicle* now listed.

Soon after the war broke out, it claimed, Gottheil visited the Russian ambassador in Paris. What was that unusual meeting with the

48 *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 12 (28 July 1916): 356.

49 *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 12 (28 July 1916): 354.

representative of “the Pogrom Government” about? It was suspicious enough that not long after it Gottheil “began his propaganda work for the Allies, and a large share of this work was for Russia.” Among other things, he tried “to keep Abe Cahan, the well-known editor of the *Forward*, from addressing Columbia University students” out of fear that he would denounce Russia’s pogrom policy.

After the Ottoman Empire entered the war, the *Chronicle* continued, Gottheil, despite his prominence as a Zionist, “came out as a propagandist against Turkey,” protesting “loudly against the Armenian atrocities, about which very little authentic news had then reached this country.”⁵⁰ But he kept quiet about the pogroms in Russia. Gottheil’s imprudent propagandizing ran a real risk of antagonizing the Central Powers against “the Jewish masses” over which they ruled. For, even though he is not as important a leader as the Russian press (a reference, presumably, to Syromiatnikov) makes him out to be, the Central Powers and Turkey nevertheless “attach importance to his words and acts and hold the Jews responsible for them.”

In view of all these egregious actions, the *Chronicle* believed what Syromiatnikov said. Gottheil was guilty.

Far be it from us to say that Richard Gottheil is a Mosser [traitor], but we say that the distant roar of cannon on the battlefields has had a peculiar effect on the Professor. He seems to have forgotten his Jewish interests in his active devotions to one group of powers in this war. And, unfortunately, Russia has made the best of his devotion.⁵¹

In its 13 October 1916 issue, the *Chronicle* went after Gottheil yet again. It reprinted a full and literal translation of the interview with

50 Decades later, one of Gottheil’s leading colleagues in the Zionist movement, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, reminisced about this period. “Whatever our attitude toward Turkey might otherwise have been, some of us, notably Professor Gottheil and myself, were moved by the Armenian atrocities to take our stand against the hideously criminal government of Turkey.” Wise expressed no regrets about this decision. See Stephen S. Wise, *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949), 182.

51 *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 16 (25 August 1916): 484–486.

Syromiatnikov, one that essentially substantiated the earlier account but also offered new information, including a report of the two men's discussion of the recent opening up of areas outside the Pale of Settlement for Jewish refugees.

"This is a good beginning," said Gottheil to me, "and as a result of this, much can be done for improving the relations of the Russian Jews in the country to Russia. But in Russia everything is so changing that it is really not altogether clear to me whether we can depend on this decision."

This unimpeachable hesitancy was accompanied, however, by an unpalatable expression of willingness to wait. Gottheil, according to Syromiatnikov, recognized that "*an alleviation of the Jewish conditions in Russia would be premature before the war ended.*"⁵²

The *Chronicle's* editors dismissed Gottheil's disavowal of Syromiatnikov's account of their meeting once again. Syromiatnikov, they maintained, was entirely credible for a variety of reasons. In particular, what he is reported to have said "is so typical of Gottheil that even his friends must recognize him in the interview." And it is so self-evidently unworthy of a Zionist leader that it is imperative, they once again insisted, that he "be kept from further participation in Jewish affairs and that the Provisional Committee for General Zionist Affairs drop him from all its councils."⁵³

Whether or not his friends would have been able to recognize Gottheil in the interview, readers a century later can at least see the basic consistency between the position he marked out in the *Menorah Journal* essay and the one outlined in the interview. Whether it was the interviewee or the interviewer on whose account we rely who soft-pedalled Russia's offenses against the Jews, it is at any rate clear that Gottheil was prepared to grant the Russians a great deal of leeway as long as their participation in the struggle against the Central Powers was needed. On the other hand, the *Chronicle* certainly went overboard in its hostile construal of Gottheil's remarks as virtual treachery against the Jewish

52 *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 22 (13 October 1916): 594.

53 *American Jewish Chronicle* 1, no. 22 (13 October 1916): 690–691.

people. They were no different in substance from the expressed views of many other Jewish leaders in France and Great Britain who believed in the moral superiority of the Allied cause and who were willing to make allowances for the Russians for the same reason that he was. Nor did they differ from the private views of other American Zionist leaders, such as Brandeis, Jacob de Haas, Stephen S. Wise, and Felix Frankfurter, who do not seem to have made any attempt to remove Gottheil from his not very influential position on the Provisional Executive Committee on this account.⁵⁴

Taking on the Turks Again

On 1 January 1917 the Turkish government took a step that is little remembered today. It went beyond its earlier repudiation of the long-standing “Capitulation treaties” with the Great Powers and shook free of restrictions on its power that had been imposed by the Treaty of Paris of 1856 and the Treaty of Berlin of 1858. There is no need here to explain the precise significance of these assertions of independence of foreign control. We do not need to understand them in order to grasp the significance of the essay that Gottheil published on 7 January in the *New York Times Magazine* under the title: “Turkey’s Latest Move ‘Intolerably Unintelligible.’” In the most salient paragraph of this piece, Gottheil states:

how the Ottoman Government can “declare that it will not fail to appeal to the principles of international law in order to have its rights respected” is intolerably unintelligible, when we know that before that can take place it will have to appear before the bar of international morality and answer for the hideous massacres perpetrated upon the Armenians—massacres and evil deeds that pass the understanding of everyone except of those whose Government stands before the world as the guarantors of the present rulers in the Turkish Empire and as sponsors for the Belgian deportations and robberies.⁵⁵

54 Leon Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 197.

55 Richard Gottheil, “Turkey’s Latest Move Intolerably Unintelligible,” *New York Times Magazine* (7 January 1917): 15.

This simultaneous swipe at Germany and Turkey made it virtually inevitable that the *American Jewish Chronicle* would quickly take Gottheil to task once again. In its 17 January issue, it mocked “the learned member” of the American Zionist Executive for failing to remember that “Palestine is still under Turkish rule and that the Jews living there have to deal with the Turks.” A true Zionist would understand that one should not rile the current rulers of the Holy Land as Gottheil had already done in the past. The *Chronicle* may have known of the negative impact of his earlier pro-Entente statement on the Turkish consul-general in New York back in 1915.⁵⁶ It is obvious, however, from the language with which it chastised him, that it certainly knew that Gottheil had already been, in 1917, as Leonard Stein reports, “severely criticized at a meeting of the Provisional Executive Committee for having attacked the Turkish Government in *The New York Times*, thus violating the rule of neutrality, which was still, it was insisted, as binding as it had always been.”⁵⁷

The *Chronicle* did not merely rebuke Gottheil; it tried to understand him. “The Zionist Gottheil,” it reasoned, “is first an Armenian, a Serb, a Roumanian, a Russian and then a Jew and a Zionist. The interests of Armenia, Serbia, Roumania, and probably Russia lie nearer to his heart than the actual political interests of his people.” For whom was Gottheil really working? asked the editors of the Germany-subsidized newspaper. These other nations, apparently. What he was engaged in was “treason pure and simple,” and, once again, the *Chronicle* called for his expulsion from the Provisional Committee for General Zionist Affairs. This was, however, the last time that the newspaper pressed for such action, and it did so without success. The entrance of the United States into the war soon made attacks on a pro-Entente American Zionist superfluous.⁵⁸

56 Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 245.

57 Stein, *Balfour Declaration*, 199.

58 Rappaport, “American Yiddish Press,” 182n13. The *Chronicle*’s publisher, Isaac Straus, was interned in March 1918 on the basis of evidence by the Department of Justice that he had received \$85,000 from Dr. Heinrich Albert, Germany Privy Councilor in the United States in 1915, in addition to \$30,000 from an unnamed source.

“What the War Means to America”

Gottheil made the headlines only one more time in the course of World War I. In March 1918 he stepped in, together with Wise, to oppose the inclusion of the Jewish Theological Seminary scholar Israel Friedlaender on a Red Cross Commission to British-occupied Palestine. Gottheil set out his grounds for doing so in the *New York Sun*.

In regard to Prof. Friedlander, while I value him highly as a scholar, I cannot refrain from deploring that influences, of whose pro-Germanism there is no doubt, were brought to bear to force him into the commission as the representative of the Jews of America. Having been outspokenly pro-German prior to our entry in the war, and ominously silent since that time, it must be admitted that he is hardly suited from the American point of view to be on a United States commission going to a land held by the British, whose armies are now fighting for its liberation.⁵⁹

Friedlander, for his part, vociferously and convincingly defended himself. Louis Marshall, who had himself always been anti-German and who had nominated Friedlaender for the commission in the first place, strongly defended him in the *New York Times*, testifying to his patriotism and loyalty and denying that he had ever been pro-German. The Joint Distribution Committee backed him up, too, but Friedlaender nevertheless chose to withdraw from the commission rather than place any kind of a cloud over its operations.

Unfair as Gottheil seems to have been in this case, it is important not to mistake his motives.⁶⁰ In her biography of Friedlaender, Baila Shargel places this episode in the context of other occasions during the war in

59 Quoted in *American Jewish Chronicle* 4, no. 19 (15 March 1918): 510.

60 He spelled them out fully in a 23 March letter to Brandeis: “I do not for a moment suggest that Dr. Friedlander would have acted as a German spy, but I do hold that he would have been open to all sorts of German influences, which are rampant in Palestine as they are in this and other countries. In a recent number of the *Nineteenth Century* Mr. Walter Sishel in an article combating Zionist work in Palestine draws attention to the fact that the congregation of large numbers of Jews there ‘might afford’ a new center for those Teutonic machinations which even now are busy in setting the crescent against the Cross.” Stephen S. Wise Papers, MS-49, Box 3, folder 4, AJA.

which Gottheil had sought to expunge pro-German individuals from the Zionist organization. She also notes that even after the United States entered the war, Friedlaender “took pains to distinguish between the kaiser’s aggressive militarism, which he abhorred, and German *Kultur*, which he admired.” This leads her to conclude, rather critically, that “for the chauvinistic Professor Gottheil, this civilized and balanced attitude must have offered proof of Friedlaender’s unsuitability for a sensitive position in British-occupied territory.⁶¹ In the light of everything we know about Gottheil’s attitude toward German *Kultur*, however, it seems more likely that, in his eyes, Friedlaender’s distinction simply did not hold water. German *Kultur* was itself the culprit. And it was his hatred of it that dominated his outlook. What Shargel says about Gottheil’s chauvinism is likewise misguided. Gottheil was not a jingoist. He was no more an American chauvinist than he was, as the *Chronicle* had argued, an Armenian or a Serb. What was ultimately of the greatest importance for him was not the glorification of America or the rescue of one or another beleaguered people but the victory of right over wrong.

Nowhere did Gottheil make this clearer than in his contribution to a symposium of the Columbia faculty on the subject of “What the War Means to America,” organized by the *Columbia Alumni News* on 17 May 1918. It deserves to be cited in full:

What the War means to America—it means, everything that we have been taught to regard as holy and precious. It is a war of contending ideals—the ones embodied in the theory “La force prime le droit”—force is superior to right; the other constituting the hope that there are such things as right and righteousness. We hold that such right and such righteousness can be worked out for the mass only in a democratic form of government. For these things—inexpressibly more precious than all that this word can offer us of its beauties and its pleasures—we must be willing to stake our possessions and our lives. The great democracies of

61 Baila Shargel, *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1985), 28. Friedlaender, it should be noted, was murdered in 1920 by Red Army soldiers while serving on a relief mission in Ukraine.

France and of England have nobly and heroically pointed the way. For nearly three years we Americans refused to see that way. We allowed ourselves to be led by inefficient theorists and by enemy propaganda masquerading under philosophical and ethical gas-masks. The revelations of Count Lichnowsky, which—to those who wished to see were nothing more than confirmations of what they knew and felt to be the truth, must have opened the eyes of the few remaining in our country who were captivated by fancies and must have revealed to them the malicious and malign purposes which animated reactionary Germany to bring on the war at all hazards.⁶² That reactionary Germany must be brought down—no matter what the cost, no matter what the pain. To do this is a demand of honor. America and her sons will surely give what they have and what they are for this purpose.⁶³

The reactionary government did fall, of course, within half a year. And Gottheil had other grounds for optimism. The previous year, when the reactionary Russian regime collapsed, he had been “filled with joy on hearing the news.” In an interview with the Columbia newspaper, he “declared it is now evident that a beginning has come to the end of the exceptional laws and regimes under which not only the Jewish people lived in that country, but also other subject peoples.” He did not hesitate to say with regard to Russia that “I have every faith in the future.” For it seemed to him “that Russia is better prepared for a more democratic control of its government than have been many of the other states of Europe.”⁶⁴ Gottheil could not have retained much of that optimism even a year later, following the Bolshevik takeover. But at least he no longer had to counsel patience regarding a backward ally’s misdeeds.

Gottheil’s support for the Allies was not bound up with any project for obtaining Zionist control of Palestine under their auspices. But he could only have been overjoyed when their victory resulted in the creation of

62 The former German Ambassador to England, Prince Karl Max Linchowsky, testified posthumously against his own government in Linchowsky, *My Mission to London 1912–1914* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918).

63 *Columbia Alumni News* 9, no. 32 (17 May 1918): 1006–1007.

64 *Columbia Spectator* 40, no. 124 (19 March 1917): 4.

vast new opportunities for the Zionist movement. It is interesting to note, however, the degree to which his pleasure was mixed with urgent concern that Zionism, too, would in the future live up to his ideals. Whatever political shape the Zionist entity in Palestine assumed, he wrote:

It must stand in cordial relations with the new Arab Kingdom of the Hejaz to the south and the coming state of Syria to the north. It must have the good will of the leading countries that are to be responsible for the international order that is in process of creation. It will not rely upon its physical strength, for, at best, it will be small in extent. It will depend upon the sense of right and of justice on the part of those to whom world-leadership will be given.⁶⁵

Here, Gottheil hoped for the best. But with regard to the already existing internal arrangements of the Jewish community in Palestine he is far more confident. The settlers, he rejoiced, have already “laid the foundations for a democratic governance that is perhaps unique of its kind: it seeks to combine the utmost freedom of individual expression with a proper regard for the good conduct of the whole community.” It was, Gottheil wrote, “democracy in excelcis.”⁶⁶

But it had to be even better. To achieve Zionism’s goals in Palestine fully, Gottheil explained,

measures must be laid down to insure other and non-Jewish interests in the country, not only their full value and their complete liberty of action, but their concurrent action with what we hope will be the dominating Jewish forces there. To work out the problems, the protecting hand of some great power is urgently needed, and all indications point to Great Britain as the one that, through special circumstances and unusual equipment, is called upon to give this pioneer aid in helping the form of Judea, that has laid prostrate for so long a time, to rise once more and take its fitting place among the powers of the world.⁶⁷

65 Richard Gottheil, “Palestine,” *International Conciliation* (Greenwich, CT) 6 (1919): 734.

66 Gottheil, “Palestine,” 736.

67 Gottheil, “Palestine,” 737.

Conclusion

Throughout World War I, Gottheil was an idealistic and zealous—if sometimes circumspect—supporter of the Allied cause. This was probably due to some degree to his British birth, but it clearly stemmed mostly from his philosophical principles. Above all, he hated Germany and what he took it to stand for. His detestation of oppression made it impossible for him to forbear, for one thing, from criticizing the Germans' Turkish ally for its treatment of the Armenians, even if that risked placing the Jews of Palestine in jeopardy, along with the future of the Zionist movement to which he so strongly adhered. Yet he was not uncompromising. Because the alliance with Russia seemed to be absolutely necessary to defeat Germany, he could resign himself to the Tsarist regime's abuses of its Jews for the duration of the war. But he never abandoned the hope that World War I would culminate in a decisive improvement in the position of Russian Jewry.

Gottheil was part of the team of pro-British American Zionists led by Brandeis who sought a diplomatic entente with Great Britain during the war, but he did not exercise significant influence over Zionist policy at this time.⁶⁸ He was mostly busy doing his job as, in Lipsky's words, a "professor of dead languages." Periodically, however, in the course of the war, he interrupted his professional activity to play a forceful and revealing, if not particularly efficacious, role in American public discourse at a pivotal moment in Jewish history. As a courageous and outspoken intellectual who successfully blended his American patriotism and his Zionism, he helped to set an important precedent for American Jewry in the twentieth century.

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68 Eli Lederhendler, *American Jewry: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 223.

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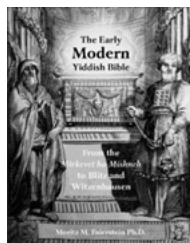
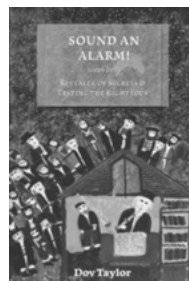
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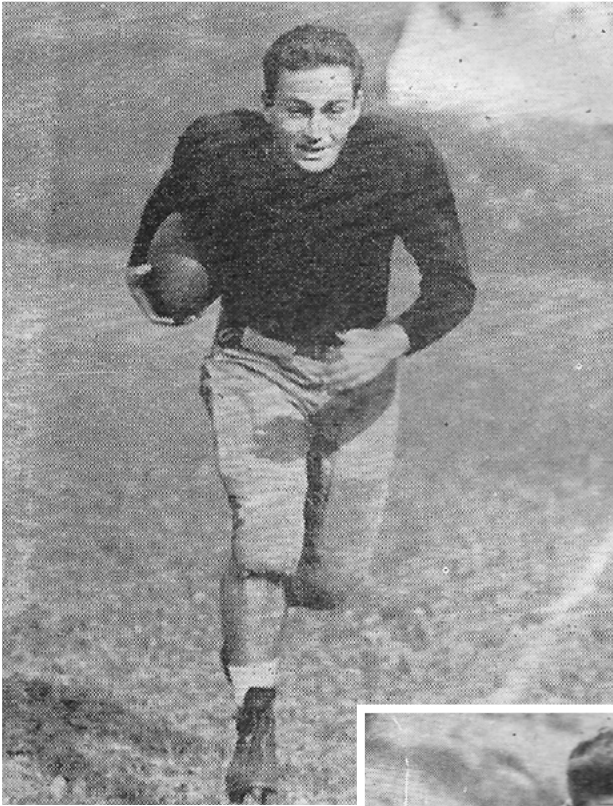
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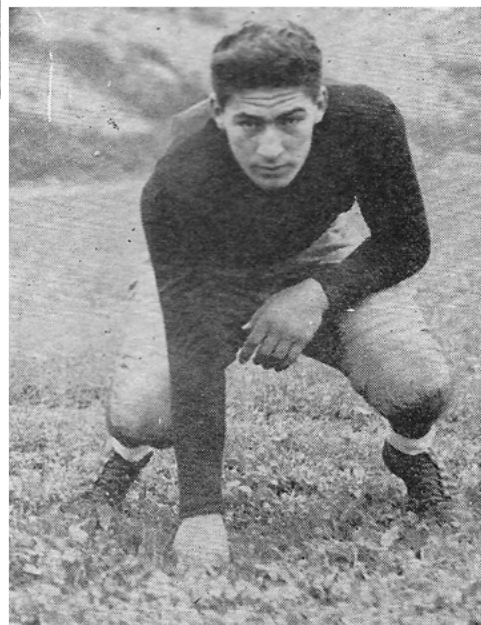
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Marty Glickman (above) and his Madison High School teammate Al Handler (right) in a 1937 Syracuse University football program.

(Courtesy Fargenblue via eBay)



Aspirations and Strategies of Jewish Students in a Brooklyn High School, 1935

JEFFREY S. GUROCK

My friend and esteemed colleague, Lance Sussman, an academic leader in our field of American Jewish history, has always valued the use of archival materials to document and present important sagas of our people's life in the United States. In honoring Professor Sussman in this deserved festschrift, I have delved into an unusual repository of sources: a Brooklyn, New York high school archive, which yielded materials that contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the life stories of young Jewish men and women who sought college education amid the Great Depression. It was one of the challenges that confronted second-generation Jews as they aspired to advance in this country.

During the 1930s, amid the Great Depression, enormous pressure was placed on Jewish young people in New York to go off to work after secondary schooling to supplement sagging family incomes. Many youngsters went so far as to leave high school without their diplomas if households were in dire straits. Given these difficult economic conditions, college attendance was a luxury that most families could not afford. Most Jewish youngsters did not aspire to earn their degree. For many, full-time occupation as a civil servant with an assured salary (like working in the post office) was the best job they could hope for—that is, if they passed the competitive examination that challenged even the most gifted student who settled for sorting or delivering the mail. Even to sit for that exam an applicant had to have a high school diploma.

As one historian has cogently argued, the 1930s were much more than just a brief halt in the saga of twentieth-century Jewish success and mobility from immigrant to subsequent American-born generations. They were a “precarious” time when “Jews worried about their financial

stability “and even questioned the “usefulness of their educational endeavor” as they thought about the future.¹

Given these vexing circumstances, if a Jewish family was determined, against the odds, to have their youngsters attend college, distinct gender-based decisions were made favoring sons over daughters. Very often when it came to sacrificing, young women were directed to go out and find jobs to buttress family finances, while the young men continued their educations. Maybe the fellows chipped in through part-time work after school or summer employment. Part of the difference was cultural. There was historically a greater premium on or even pride in sons rather than daughters advancing academically. As one disappointed girl who went to work while her brother went on in school explained: “a college education” for a boy “was a matter of life position.” Perhaps more important from a purely practical perspective, there were positions for women in roles like stenographer, bookkeeper, or typist in which they could readily use skills that they acquired in high school.²

With a student population that was overwhelmingly Jewish, the educational goals and destinations of pupils at James Madison High School in Flatbush, Brooklyn, deviated in significant ways from most of those who attended other secondary schools in New York City.³ To begin with,

1 On the problems wrought for Jews during the Great Depression, see Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

2 On the proclivity of Jewish women being directed to go to work while their brothers went to college see Wenger, *New York Jews*, 62–63; Nettie Pauline McGill, “Some Characteristics of Jewish Youth in New York City,” *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* (1938): 256–258; Leonard Dinnerstein, “Education and the Advancement of American Jews,” in *American Education and the European Immigrant 1840–1940*, ed. Bernard J. Weiss (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 47. On the post office as an alternative to college, see Betty Rizzo and Barry Wallenstein, eds., *City in the Center: A Collection of Writings by CCNY Alumni and Faculty* (New York: City College of New York, 1983), 67.

3 The projection of what Madison students of the class of 1935 desired to do upon graduation from high school is derived from an analysis of their brief bios in *The Log*. Not all the desired information is available—for example, the exact proportion of Jewish students, male and female, attending college. James Madison school records do not indicate the religion of students. The determination of the high proportion of Jews at the school was based on the Jewish-sounding names (e.g., Cohen or Goldberg) as opposed to non-Jewish names (e.g., Connelly or O’Brien) derived from the school yearbooks, called

almost all Madison Jewish high schoolers—men and women—desired to attend college. Even more remarkable, so many of them sought to earn their sheepskins at institutions of higher learning that harbored strict quotas limiting Jewish presence on their campuses. The fortunate ones gained admission because they were exceptionally talented in the classroom. Since these Ivies pledged allegiance to academic excellence, these brightest of Jews seemingly could not be kept out. Or these aspirants found ways of entering privileged schools through back doors such as Columbia's Extension School or its avant-garde New College as well as its long-standing Teachers College. In these outlets, which were favorable to Jews, the university's exclusionary policies were partially mitigated. Finally, these New York Jews found welcoming educational homes both in one of Gotham's Irish-Catholic colleges and in areas of the country where schools prided themselves on exclusion of minorities—not Jews but African Americans. Interestingly, when they enrolled in Southern schools, like Louisiana State University or the University of Alabama, they found out that local Jews were less than thrilled that their Northern coreligionists were visible as they studied at their region's colleges. The academic and social aspirations of these Jewish Brooklyn high school students deepen the narrative of interwar Jewish college realities and is worthy of comparison with other schools in New York and other places.

Predictably, the most popular choice was either City College of New York (CCNY) or its younger sister school, Brooklyn College, presuming—in both cases—that they had the grades to gain acceptance. And the James Madison records show that the students in its 1935 senior class “earned the highest scholastic average in the city.” If they were able to matriculate at CCNY, they would be exposed to a very high-quality education and perhaps just as important, it was free of charge. Moreover, they would be comfortable studying among their own kind, much like they had in the halls of Madison. At that point in the 1930s, it was estimated that 80–90% of that college's students were Jewish. Some of their professors sought to break them from their ancestral backgrounds

The Log (1932–1935), and from memoirs of students. On the estimated proportion of Jews at CCNY and Hunter in the 1930s, see Dinnerstein, “Education,” 50 and Stephen Steinberg, *The Academic Melting Pot* (Berkeley, CA: Carnegie Foundation, 1974), 9.

and ways of speech and did not especially like any outward assertions of ethnicity. But most students ignored these assaults on their identities. They were not out to become more committed Jews. Rather, they wanted to advance their future careers once the troubling economic crisis passed. Logistically, in the case of the local free-of-charge school, Brooklyn College, it was convenient to attend a school situated not far from where they grew up. The college was located just two long blocks on Bedford Avenue over Avenue P from James Madison High School.⁴

For those young men who did not quite have the grades for CCNY but whose families had some tuition funds available, the Washington Square campus of New York University (NYU) beckoned. It was situated only a short subway ride from Flatbush past the Lower East Side. It has been estimated that the annual tuition at that school in the 1930s was \$360. NYU, too, had a robust academic reputation and was a predominantly “Jewish” school, with Jews approximated at 63% of the student body in 1931. The hopeful word in the James Madison hallways as the class of 1935 contemplated its future was that just a year earlier four of the school’s best students—named August, Gittelson, Klein, and Meyer—had earned scholarships to NYU as the private college looked for candidates who were “likely” to post “an honorable college record.”⁵

Within their own graduating class of 1935, some three dozen James Madison students were granted tuition scholarships by New York State to “any approved college in the state” that would accept them. NYU was a logical option for these achievers who had to have compiled at least a ninety-three average in their studies to qualify for their grant. One such awardee, Clemens Prokeach was the winner of a chemistry contest that Long Island University sponsored when he identified “32 out 35 chemicals substances.”⁶

4 On the school’s high ranking, see Beth Sherman, “Class of ’35 Recalls Glory Days at James Madison,” *New York Times* (14 October 1985): B5. On CCNY faculty disdain for the ethnic background and heritage of Jewish students, see Sherry Gorelick, *City College and the Jewish Poor: Education in New York, 1880–1924* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981).

5 “30 Scholarships Awarded by N.Y.U.,” *New York Times* (28 June 1934): 18.

6 “34 at Madison High Win Scholarships,” *Brooklyn Eagle* (26 November 1935): 11.

There was another NYU in town, but it was not welcoming to Jews. As early as 1894, the university also had an uptown campus in bucolic University Heights in the Bronx, miles away from Brooklyn and, more significantly, out of reach when it came to admissions policies for Jews. This branch was characterized as a “men’s country college, with the good old American collegiate spirit.” Jewish men were not welcomed there into what was called in the 1930s “the last stand of the old Guard” and “the darling hope and pride of the administration” and Jewish women were not admitted to the uptown branch until after World War II.⁷

It was of little moment to those young men and women who were accepted for admission at the downtown branch of NYU that its detractors referred to it as “New York Jew.” Scholarship winners August Gittelson, Klein, and Meyer—who had been aggressively pursued to enroll—could have cared less about that canard from restrictionists in the Bronx. Incidentally, those who did not like CCNY referred to it derogatorily as the College of Circumcised New Yorkers.

Meanwhile, positioned in the middle of the pack in class rankings but attuned to the atmosphere of academic achievement was another young man who was hopeful that his career aspirations would eventually lead to his becoming a physician. Marty Glickman did not become a doctor but would be remembered from his success as an athlete and then as a New York sports broadcaster—one of James Madison’s most famous alumni. Indeed, fifty years after graduation, in 1985, when his high school classmates recalled “glory days at James Madison,” Glickman along with Bernard Saul, “a retired Air Force Brigadier General...and Martin Abramson, an author and former war correspondent” were singled out by a reporter as alumni who had “achieved distinction.” It is

An examination of the names of award winners suggests that, of the thirty-four granted scholarships, thirty-one were awarded to Jewish recipients. On Prokeach, see “Chemical Prizes Awarded at LIU,” *Brooklyn Eagle* (12 March 1935): 10.

⁷ On Jewish presence at NYU and the negativity ascribed to that school and CCNY by detractors, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Jews in Gotham: New York Jews in a Changing City* (New York: NYU Press, 2012): 47–48. On perceptions of the uptown campus, see also Heywood Broun and George Britt, *Christians Only: A Study in Prejudice* (New York: Vanguard, 1931), 106–107.

not known what grade point averages Saul and Abramson earned, but Abramson did graduate from CCNY in 1939. Saul was an outlier, as he earned his college sheepskin not immediately after high school but after his service in World War II.⁸

Fortuitously for Glickman, with the help of some Jewish Syracuse University alumni, he secured enrollment and financial aid to attend their alma mater.⁹ These Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity brothers' quixotic belief was that if Glickman became an Orangeman and triumphed for the university, his success would lead to greater tolerance toward Jews at a time when Syracuse was tightening its Jewish admissions quotas.

Glickman did very well as a football player and track man. When it came to varsity sports Syracuse was a meritocracy. His celebrity did not lead to the university admitting more Jewish students to Syracuse, however. In fact, during his matriculation, the percentage of Jews at the school declined. At the time Glickman enrolled at Syracuse that school had abandoned its earlier tolerant attitude toward Jews and was emulating the well-known restrictive policies of Ivy League schools. By the numbers, between 1918 and 1923, the percentage of Jewish students had increased from 6 to 15%. Many of these Jewish undergraduates hailed from New York City. In the mid-1920s, as the admissions officers shifted their recruitment efforts away from large Jewish population areas, the percentage of Jews on campus went down to 12% and the leadership's unannounced but planned goal was to get the Jewish presence under 10% to ensure that Syracuse educates "the type of student we desire." During

8 Sherman, "Class of '35," B5. On Saul's career, see *General Officers of the Army and Air National Guard* (Washington, DC: National Guard Bureau, 1977). See also John Hess, "Madison High Alumni Mark 50 Golden Years," *New York Times* (6 January 1974): 41.

9 On Glickman's academic record and aspirations at Madison, his enrollment at Syracuse, and his career-training decision as a freshman at Syracuse, see his autobiography, Marty Glickman with Stan Isaacs, *The Fastest Kid on the Block: The Marty Glickman Story* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), esp. 42–49. On his contemporaries' prediction while still in high school that Glickman was destined to be a physician, see the brochure *The Milestone* (New York: n.p., 1935) and *The Log* (1935): 91, 93, 106. For a comprehensive treatment of the entirety of Glickman's life, including a full discussion of the events surrounding his sidelining in Berlin, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Marty Glickman: The Life of an American Jewish Sports Legend* (New York: NYU Press, 2023).

Glickman's years at the school, 1935–1939, “the percentage of Jews admitted to Syracuse ranged from seven percent to nine and a half percent.” The situation would not change for the better until 1942. Then, despite some enduring unhappiness among Christian alumni and students to the school's opening policies, between 1939 and 1945 the Jewish percentage rose from 7.5 to 18%.¹⁰ As circumstances would have it, Glickman had to deal with his own encounter with pernicious antisemitism that would darken his youthful dreams. As a Syracuse freshman, Glickman made the U.S. Olympic team and was scheduled to compete in a signature event at the Berlin games only to have American team officials remove him and another Jewish runner, Sam Stoller, from the squad a day before the big race. These Nazi sympathizing sports leaders did not want to embarrass Hitler and his entourage, who would be attending at the stadium, by having Jews stand victorious on the gold medal platform.¹¹

There was another local college alternative—St. John's College, then still in Brooklyn—that was open to Jewish male aspirants just as it was popular among James Madison's Christian classmates who were also uncommonly interested in higher education. This Catholic college, with its low tuition, also welcomed Jews in the interwar period and was particularly attractive to those undergraduates who wished to eventually attend St. John's School of Law that was opened in 1925. In fact, St. John's showed an uncommon sensitivity to the religious values of its minority of Jewish students, ironically much more than CCNY or Brooklyn College. The annual catalogs at St. John's clearly stated that its mission was to raise “cultured *Catholic* gentlem[en]” who would be “good citizens of the state and a source of pride to the Church.” Toward that end, “moral training and religious instruction” was deemed “a reason for the existence of the *Catholic* college.”

Favorably for Jews who gained admittance, the school's administration, without explicitly noting possible Jewish concerns, made clear

10 Harvey Strum “Discrimination at Syracuse University,” *History of Higher Education Annual* (1984): 104, 106–107, 113. See also Strum, “Anti-Semitism at Syracuse University,” *American Jewish Archives* 35, 2 (April 1983): 4.

11 On Glickman's exclusion from the Olympic race, see Glickman with Isaacs, *Fastest Kid*, 17–24.

that those students of a different faith would not have to be subjected to Catholic religious indoctrination. It prescribed a subtle, yet powerful accommodation that obviated the theology courses question. Year after year in the 1920s through the mid-1930s, the college catalog decreed: “religion is a required subject *for all Catholic* students.” Moreover, the school ordained “no year’s work is complete...until the student, *if Catholic*, has passed his examination in the prescribed religion course, unless the student has already obtained the required eight semesters.” In other words, while Catholics were burdened, Jews, and seemingly also the minority of Protestants at the college, were exempt. There also is every indication that the Jewish minority was socially accepted both inside and outside the classroom. They were admitted to fraternities, were on the staffs of the college newspaper and yearbook and were cheerleaders at football and basketball games; a group of outstanding Jewish basketball players, called the “Wonder Five,” even suited up and won a remarkable string of games for their alma mater. They were the pride of the school. Incidentally, in the mid-1930s, St. John’s even announced that it was home to a branch of Avukah, the American Student Zionism Federation. The catalogs also noted a very different but highly positive aspect of a St. John’s undergraduate education that proved attractive to Jewish students. The rule was that students who by their junior year had “shown marked ability in the course of their studies” were allowed, with the deans’ permission, to “enter the School of Law” that opened in 1925. After one year of “satisfactory” study in that professional school, they would be awarded their baccalaureate degrees. Assuming they stuck to their books, they would finish their education with two degrees. It has been estimated that, as of 1930, five years after St. John’s School of Law opened, approximately 60% of the students were Jews.¹²

However, James Madison graduates of that era were not particularly concerned with burnishing their Jewish identities, be they enrolled at the culturally dismissive CCNY or Brooklyn College or, for that matter, at

12 On St. John’s openness to Jewish students in the 1920s–1930s, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, “A Tradition of Acceptance: Jews and Their Basketball Players at an Irish Catholic College,” in *American Ways: Irish and Jewish Encounters*, ed. Hasia Diner and Miriam Nyhan Grey (New York: NYU Press, 2023), 184–201.

welcoming St. John's. They were simply unabashed careerists. Indeed, as they readied for college, there was very little interest among their ranks at the Bedford Avenue school for a formal expression of group identification. For most of them, the streets of their Brooklyn neighborhoods where they gathered with their own kind informally on a day-by-day basis was enough Jewish ethnicity. While there was a Junior Menorah Club at the high school, it had few members. Meanwhile, the club's leader sought to introduce Hebrew into the curriculum through a petition campaign among their fellow students in 1935 as a sign of pride in their heritage, and as a recognized New York State Regents-approved foreign language, important for college admission, but the attempt went nowhere.¹³

The initiator of this unsuccessful curriculum move was Oscar Fleishaker, founder and president of the Junior Menorah Club and another of the fellows at James Madison who, like Saul, was an outlier. Like Glickman, Fleishaker was college bound and hoped to eventually become a physician. But, evidently a Zionist, he planned to receive his training in Jerusalem at Palestine's Hebrew University. There, of course, he also would not have to deal with the exclusionary antisemitism that would undermine so many Jewish students who hoped to be admitted to medical school. Ultimately, however, Fleishaker ended up staying stateside and received his undergraduate degree from Yeshiva College, then a small start-up Orthodox Jewish school in Upper Manhattan; he subsequently earned ordination from its rabbinical school. He would then serve for decades as a rabbi in the Midwest, New Hampshire, and Canada.¹⁴

James Madison's Jewish alumnae approached higher education almost as readily as did their male classmates. In so doing, they broke with the low-level career destination that stymied most other young women of

13 On the nature of informal Jewish identity in neighborhoods of that era that were majority Jewish, see Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). On the introduction of Hebrew into public schools but not at Madison, see Judah Lapson, "A Decade of Hebrew in the High Schools of New York City," *Jewish Education* XIII, 1 (April 1941): 34–45. See also "May Teach Hebrew at Madison High," *Brooklyn Eagle* (25 March 1935): 5.

14 Interview with Donald Fleishaker, 24 January 2020.

that era. According to student profiles in the yearbook of 1935, only rarely did a distaff Jewish student indicate that she did not seek advanced educational training. Those who did so said—as expected—that they were prepared to go into “business,” presumably working in a family store or in secretarial work, perhaps to help their brothers attend college.

Of course, as was the case for their brothers, Brooklyn College made abundant sense, being not only a tuition free and local school, but also co-educational, as was Hunter College in Manhattan, the renowned and more prestigious all-female school. But it was an annoying commute away. Indeed, a college report of 1938 estimated that a student who resided in Brooklyn put in forty minutes in trains, buses, and trolleys for every sixty minutes she attended classes. Joyce Gale was one such commuting student standout, whose reputation for classroom excellence at Madison followed her to Hunter College. As a freshman, she made her high school science instructors feel very proud when the local daily, the *Brooklyn Eagle* praised her for continuing at college her “blood research;” a project she began on Bedford Avenue.¹⁵

Then there were the Jewish youngsters—both men and women—who sought to venture away from the ethnic cocoons of neighborhood, high school, and welcoming colleges to seek enrollment at campuses located in towns well beyond their home borough and city, where there were few Jews in the area—demographically so different from Brooklyn. Breaking with the old neighborhoods was not the most common practice but many made that move. To some degree being part of a much larger American world was an exciting prospect. Although he would maintain strong residual ties to his family and boyhood friends back home, Glickman would recall that Syracuse “was away...it was out of the city. It was what I thought college should be and I’d never had been there until I matriculated.”¹⁶

15 On the traveling woes of Jewish students at Hunter College, see Gurock, *Jews in Gotham*, 50. See also “Girl Scientist Will Experiment at Home,” *Brooklyn Eagle* (10 February 1935): 56.

16 On Glickman wanting to attend an out-of-town school, see his oral history interview conducted in 1979 with the William L. Wiener Oral History Library, American Jewish Committee, p. 83, New York Public Library.

Others who looked to what we would call today “out-of-town” schools perhaps approached these schools because they did not have the grades to enroll at CCNY, Brooklyn, or Hunter but were seemingly among the minority of Jews in the Flatbush neighborhood who, despite Depression struggles and worries, had sufficient family monies to afford tuitions for their children. Away from their home state, they would not be able to take advantage of New York scholarship largesse. One study of Jewish college choices completed in 1937 suggested that “perhaps...studying elsewhere [was] due to the limited number of educational institutions in New York City and their frequent overcrowding” as well as “the quotas which exist” in some of the best schools “which led Jews in that great Jewish center to seek opportunities elsewhere.” The fact is that students from New York City appear in large numbers in every part of the country, in sections as far removed from Gotham as the University of Alabama, Ohio State University, and the University of Wisconsin. In smaller numbers, they are even found on the Pacific Coast and in Canada.”¹⁷

Such was the situation with those of the Madison class of 1935 who sought out such schools as the College of William and Mary in Virginia, North Carolina College, the University of Missouri, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, Northwestern University, the University of Southern California, Penn State University, and Ohio University. A goodly number also enrolled at schools closer to home in Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. These aspirants were pleased, but not very surprised, when that fat acceptance letter arrived in their Brooklyn home mailboxes. If James Madison High School had college guidance counselors, they might have told them that “non-elite universities situated away from urban centers or in the Midwest” had a reputation for admitting high-achieving Jewish students. A Jewish newspaper service had publicized that tolerant policy just a few years earlier. Still, these applicants had pause to ponder whether they would be happy on these far-away campuses.¹⁸

17 On the college choices of out-of-town Jewish students, see Lee J. Levinger, *The Jewish Student in America: A Study Made by the Research Bureau of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation* (Cincinnati, OH: B'nai B'rith, 1937), 20.

18 On the admissions policies of so-called non-elite colleges, see Henry L. Feingold,

Troubling social issues that could have made their tenures as undergraduates uninviting stemmed from two very different sources. First, in 1931, a widely read journalistic expose of social antisemitism revealed that Christian fellow students at many schools that did admit Jews to their institutions treated their minority classmates very poorly. The report that Heywood Broun and George Britt proudly “published for the first time” was heralded as “the most comprehensive of all studies of race prejudice in education... [It] divided institutions into four classes depending upon the degree of anti-Jewish feeling.” The research based on questionnaires filled out by Jewish students on campuses looked at “social aloofness” and ostracism from fraternities and sororities, not to mention “offensive jokes in student publications” and “general unfriendliness.”

Predictably, CCNY and Hunter—the local meccas—displayed “no anti-Jewish feeling,” as did North Carolina which was on the list of out-of-town schools that Madison graduates sought. These young Jews seemingly also would find a good degree of social acceptance at universities in Missouri and Wisconsin, but they would face “moderate” prejudice at the University of Michigan. However, Northwestern and Johns Hopkins were downed in the survey as harboring “pronounced anti-Jewish behaviors.”¹⁹

If social problems with Christian classmates were not bad enough, in many instances Jewish fellow undergraduates who were indigenous to far smaller Jewish communities in the South, Midwest, and far West were not exactly thrilled to have “New York Jews” around. The Brooklyn girls—and especially boys—were frequently stereotyped as obstreperous and ill-mannered and possibly as trouble-making radicals, even if most of these students minded their Ps and Qs.²⁰ It is not known how

A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 15–16. The listing of desired colleges articulated in the high school yearbook reflects the noted aspirations, anticipations, and hopes of seniors. It is possible that a proportion of these students did not achieve that goal.

¹⁹ Broun and Britt, *Christians Only*, 88–93.

²⁰ On the undesirability of New York students at out-of-town universities, see Marianne Sanua, “‘We Hate New York’: Negative Images of the Promised City as a Source for

Franklin Dobison socially navigated a unique scholarship offer that was tendered to him to attend Johns Hopkins, given its campus's negative attitude toward Jews. He received an unusual financial assistance grant from New York State that consisted of monies to pay tuition out of state in Baltimore, Maryland. This Arista member may have found a degree of acceptance since he was also quite the all-around fellow, having been president of his class for two terms and competed on the varsity swim team. But, if he was ostracized at the school, perhaps he found friends and social solace within the off-campus and robust Baltimore Jewish community.²¹

Finally, some Jewish members within the school's Arista—the academic pride of James Madison—made a small dent in the paper ceilings of those most restrictive colleges and universities both within and outside of New York City. They had to have known by the time they graduated that Ivy League and other elite institutions had “adopted policies designed to reduce their Jewish enrollment” for almost a generation. The argument was made against the unwanted that while Jews had the intellectual acumen to succeed in the classroom and laboratory, they did not possess the refined social skills to be warranted members of campus society. Discrimination was masked somewhat when admissions directors spoke about seeking out a “geographically diverse student body”—which meant, of course, avoiding welcoming “too many Jews” from the large urban centers. In the 1930s, Syracuse was following suit in its admissions policies, but it was not the most egregious offender.

Dartmouth College, as a prime example, situated in bucolic Hanover, New Hampshire, had a long history of exclusion dating back to the turn of the twentieth century when only 4% of its students were Jews. Thirty or more years later, the situation had not changed much when its director of admissions asserted that, if more than 5% or 6% of the student body was Jewish, the institution would be “overrun racially.”

Jewish Fraternity and Sorority Members, 1920–1940,” in *An Inventory of Promises: Essays on American Jewish History in Honor of Moses Rischin*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Carlson, 1995), 237.

21 “Honored by State,” *Brooklyn Eagle* (4 August 1935): B11.

The few Jews that did get in faced a hostile educational environment. The status of Jewish young men and young women at Cornell—the co-ed Ivy—in Ithaca, New York, also hours away from Brooklyn, was not much better. In 1920, it was estimated that Jews constituted 9% of the student population, and the numbers and percentages decreased in the decade to come. Although President Livingston Farrand asserted in 1933 that while “we have not formulated an ultimate solution on admissions” he was “sure that a university like Cornell cannot permit itself to be so flooded with Jewish students as to kill non-Jewish attendance.” Similarly, at Yale, Jewish presence was effectively capped at less than 10% as of the early 1920s to address what its admissions people deemed their “Jewish Problem.”²²

Even in the most Jewish American city of New York, at Columbia University, the percentage of Jews enrolled dropped from approximately 40% before World War I to the neighborhood of 22% a decade later. In 1929, for example, of the five hundred freshmen on campus, ninety-two were Jews. Its numbers and policies were much like NYU uptown. That year, no more than 20% of the students at its sister school, Barnard College, were Jews. When that study of Jewish college choices was completed in 1937, it suggested that “perhaps...studying elsewhere” was due to “the quotas which exist” in New York City. Most likely the survey was referring to Columbia, the uptown branch of NYU, and Barnard. Yet, despite these paltry, discouraging, and decreasing numbers, many Jews at James Madison aspired to be admitted and were willing to deal with enduring social discrimination on campus. In every class there were a few who successfully ascended Ivy-covered walls, and their achievements did not go unnoticed.²³

22 Steinberg, *Academic Melting Pot*, 5, 15–16; Broun and Britt, *Christians Only*, 73,75; Feingold, *Time*, 15–17; William H. Honan, “Dartmouth Reveals Anti-Semitic Past,” *New York Times* (11 November 1997): 16; Tamar Buchsbaum, “A Note on Antisemitism in Admissions at Dartmouth,” *Jewish Social Studies* 49, 2 (Winter 1987): 79–84; Elaine D. Engst, *Jewish Life at Cornell, 1865–2005* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Library, 2005), 13–14, 32; Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 49–56.

23 Broun and Britt, *Christians Only*, 74.

Such was the case with some of the best students at James Madison in 1932, when the members of the class of 1935 were just starting out as high school freshmen. For example, the almost legendary senior valedictorian and Arista president Seymour Nadler was admitted to Columbia after his classmates voted him “best boy student.” The “class history” in that grade’s yearbook gushed that “never before has Madison turned out a phenomenon like Seymour Nadler.

He is the only boy in the history of Madison who has held the three highest offices that the school possesses: Boy Leader of the Arista, President of the General Organization, and editor in chief of the school newspaper, the *Madison Highway*. When this is added to the fact that he is the highest average in the graduating class, we may boast that we possess very distinct differences from the classes of yore.

A follow-up piece in that journal predicted that fifteen years after he left Bedford Avenue, *Dr.* Nadler would become a millionaire due to his wisdom in investing in that new invention called television. Far from the retiring type, Nadler was the author of that prediction. As it turned out, Nadler did well at Columbia, graduating in 1936 with a degree in education from its Teachers College program. He also seems to have been accepted socially outside of class even if his diploma was not from Columbia College, the most elite wing of the university. A man about campus, he twice was chosen as scriptwriter for Columbia’s Varsity Show. Nadler’s counterpart “Girl president” of the Arista, Harriet Ulman, made it to Barnard after serving as associate editor and after being voted “best girl student.” She was, not incidentally, the author of the “Class History” that showered much abundant praise on Nadler.²⁴

The matriculations of Nadler and Ulman constitute evidence that not every Jew in the class of 1935 who applied to these discriminatory schools was turned away and that those who made it did not always face problems of social prejudice on campus. Leo J. Koven was another one of the winners from the Brooklyn schools. Initially, he made it known

24 On Nadler and Ulman, see *The Log* (June 19): 33, 51, 60. See also “Columbia Show Script,” *New York Times* (11 December 1936): 34. On Columbia College being the elite branch of the university, see Broun and Britt, *Christians Only*, 74.

that he was off to Cornell only to eventually turn up at Yale where he graduated in 1939 before earning that coveted medical degree at NYU's College of Medicine.²⁵

Irwin Naitove was a third noteworthy success story. An Arista member and an editor of both the yearbook and student newspaper, Naitove gained admission to Dartmouth and did very well there, earning placement on the college's honor roll after his freshman year. He was but one of sixty-six newcomers (10% of the incoming class) so honored and, seemingly, he was the only Jew on the list. Naitove graduated in 1939 and pursued a career as a banker while being a loyal alumnus of Dartmouth, evident, for example, in the fact that he wrote for the alumni newsletter.²⁶

Then there was the remarkable and soft-spoken Norman Wild—Madison 1935, Columbia BA 1939 and MA 1941—an academic genius who clearly could not be kept out of Morningside Heights. In fact, he was vigorously recruited. While still in high school, Wild became intrigued by the study of foreign languages and took all the Spanish and French classes offered. Columbia officials were so impressed with his acumen that he was designated a “Pulitzer Columbia Scholar” and entered the school free of charge. At the university, he majored in Chinese and Japanese and soon put his expert training to good use on behalf of his country as a codebreaker, initially during World War II and then in the Korean War. Eventually, he translated, edited, and corrected “thousands of vocabulary entries” that formed the basis for the “most widely used Chinese-English dictionary” that aided America's intelligence community in its work. In 2002, he was honored by the National Security Agency for his decades of work as a “silent sentinel.”²⁷

25 On Koven, see his brief bio in a marriage notice, “Joan Cummings Fiancee,” *New York Times* (24 April 1949): 73. It is again noteworthy that Koven is reported in the yearbook as off to Cornell when this Ivy Leaguer ultimately enrolled at Yale.

26 On Naitove, see references to his high school activities in the Madison yearbook, his obituary *New York Times* (10 July 2007): online edition; “Dartmouth Honors Won by 405 Students,” *New York Times* (23 August 1936): N8; and *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (June 1958): online edition, where Naitove enumerated the successes of his fellow graduates.

27 “City's Brightest Boy Awarded Pulitzer Columbia Scholarship,” *Brooklyn Eagle* (12 September 1935): 32. Indicative of the incomplete registrar files, Wild is not listed

Others within the Madison graduating class of 1935, also possessed of very fine academic records and impressive extracurricular credentials, believed that even in an era of quotas they, too, could overcome barriers. That year twenty-four young men had enrollment at Columbia foremost on their minds. An additional dozen men and women looked seriously at Cornell, while two fellows sought out Yale and Dartmouth.²⁸ And at least when it came to getting into Columbia there were two well-known back-door options toward eventual enrollment at the Manhattan school that were in their neighborhood. Although it is not possible to determine precisely how many Jewish Madison men took these strategic routes, members of the class of 1935 graduated just in time to begin attending Seth Low Junior College, which operated from 1928 to 1937 out of rented space in the upper floors of the Brooklyn Law School on Pearl Street in Brooklyn Heights. After two years at this prep school, which did not discriminate against Jews—in fact 80% of the enrollees were Jews—a student might qualify to finish degree work at Columbia as a “university undergraduate.” In 1937, after Low College closed due to financial difficulties, remaining students were absorbed into the aforementioned Extension School. Similarly, from 1932 to 1939, until its funds ran dry, Columbia’s Teachers College operated what was called the New College. It proffered an innovative and progressive curriculum, was open to all qualified students and made academic scholarships generously available. A full one-third of the New College entering class in 1932—some twenty-one students—were openly identified as “Hebrews.” By comparison in 1934, only 17% of Columbia’s regular entering class was Jewish. Of course, like the long-standing Teachers

as a Columbia graduate. See also Ariel Sabar, “NSA Belatedly Recognizes Six ‘Silent Sentinels,’” *Baltimore Sun* (14 June 2002); online edition and “Norman Wild: 2002 Hall of Fame Inductee,” National Security Agency/Central Security Service, <https://www.nsa.gov/History/Cryptologic-History/Historical-Figures/Historical-Figures-View/Article/1643902/norman-wild/>.

28 The listing of desired colleges in the high school yearbooks does not correspond to registrar records at these elite institutions, which suggests that these designations are what applicants from James Madison hoped for, aspired to, or anticipated attending and not whether they gained admission.

College that had graduated Nadler, neither the Extension School nor the New College was the elite Columbia College. But an otherwise disappointed James Madison alumnus could still say, with his diploma in hand, that he was a graduate of New York's Ivy League school.²⁹

In the early postwar period, Jewish students at James Madison High School with plans to attend the nation's most prestigious universities would not be as troubled by discriminatory policies. It was a time, amid the beginnings of the Cold War, when American leaders and educational institutions came to believe that, to defeat the Communist Russians, their country had to train its best and brightest with much less regard to candidates' ancestral backgrounds. Although some old-time alumni complained that their alma maters were becoming "brain plants," the need to beat the Soviets in the laboratories prevailed. And the best Jewish students at James Madison continued to do well on tests in school, not to mention the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Moreover, when a male Jewish candidate who had been a military veteran of World War II gained admission, they had their tuition paid by a grateful government through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill. Saul could attest to the bounties of that benevolent policy. Young women and young men who had not served in the military may have benefitted from the family's rising incomes within an American economy decidedly on the upswing, which would make it possible for them to pursue higher education without second thoughts. Now, when Jewish students arrived on out-of-town campuses, they increasingly integrated well with fellow young men and young women of varying backgrounds on teams, in fraternities and sororities, and within other extracurricular activities. Among the Madison luminaries of that next, more favorable era, was future US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Madison 1950) who as an undergraduate went out of town to Cornell, and attended Harvard Law School before earning her degree at Columbia. Future

29 Claudia Gohn, "Nearly a Century Ago, Columbia's Jewish Applicants Were Sent to Brooklyn," *Columbia Spectator* (13 April 2019): online edition. See also George W. Lucero, "New College, Teachers College, Columbia University: A Demonstration Experimental Teachers College (1932-1939)" (unpublished Doctor of Education thesis, Illinois State University, 2009), 147-148.

Senator Chuck Schumer (Madison 1967) followed suit to Cambridge as both as a student at Harvard College before studying at the university's law school. However, future Senator Bernie Sanders (Madison 1967) first stayed at home at Brooklyn College—its free tuition as always, was an enduring attraction—before enrolling at the University of Chicago.³⁰

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30 On the new era of declining antisemitism in admissions and social life on college campuses, see Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 39, 44, 94–96, 99.



Dorothy Lehman Bernhard
(Courtesy William Lehman Bernhard)

Two Unsung Heroes: Dorothy Lehman Bernhard and Carolin Flexner and Their Assistance to Refugees

KAREN S. FRANKLIN

The role of American Jews in responding to the rise of Nazism in Europe and the resulting international refugee crisis has been debated for decades. Did they respond sufficiently to the existential threat? Might they have done more to assist European Jews? More attention in recent years has been given to the valiant efforts of Americans who facilitated the immigration of refugees—in supplying funds, completing the maze of paperwork required to exit from European countries and enter the United States (or any country that would take them), arranging for transport, and liaising with refugee organizations. Less attention has been paid to the process of supporting and preparing refugees to meet the challenges of American life. This article examines the efforts of Dorothy Lehman Bernhard and Carolin Flexner, two American women whose work with refugees was notable yet is rarely acknowledged in historical analysis.

An introductory text panel to the exhibition *Against the Odds: American Jews and the Rescue of Europe's Refugees, 1933–1941* at the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust succinctly outlines the historical context:

When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933 and began to persecute the Jews, they touched off an international refugee crisis that escalated through the 1930s.

Most countries refused to accept large numbers of Jewish refugees. Many German Jews hoped to come to the United States, but laws passed by Congress in the 1920s had ended the era of open immigration. The new policy set strict quotas that made no special allowances for refugees.

Jews in flight from the Nazi regime reached out to relatives, friends, and even strangers in America, whose sponsorship was essential if they hoped to secure US visas. *Against the Odds* tells the story of American Jews who answered their call for help. Working within the limits of American immigration law, they overcame obstacles to bring thousands of Jewish refugees to safety.¹

Bernhard and Flexner devoted their efforts not only to rescuing, but also to resettling refugees. Their work is documented in the Herbert H. Lehman Papers housed in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University Libraries. The collection includes private letters, documents, and regular reports of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, which were prepared and distributed by Bernhard to its donors.²

The two women's respective positions, networks, and influence, as well as the financial resources available to them—not to mention their considerable perseverance and dedication—allowed them to address the myriad needs of and issues facing incoming refugees. But their ability to navigate complicated governmental and social systems hinged upon and was amplified by their respective connections to New York State Governor Herbert H. Lehman.

Lehman was the youngest of eight children of Mayer Lehman, a founder of the company that would later become the investment firm Lehman Brothers. Herbert H. Lehman was a leader in refugee policy and assistance. Following his service in the United States Army in World War I, he worked at Lehman Brothers and assisted the Joint Distribution Committee in post-World War I reconstruction, working closely with

1 For further information on the exhibition, see "Against the Odds: American Jews and the Rescue of Europe's Refugees, 1933–1941," Museum of Jewish Heritage, <https://mjh-nyc.org/exhibitions/odds-american-jews-rescue-europes-refugees-1933-1941/>.

2 There were five formal reports of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund. The First Report (numbers one and two were not numbered) was dated 1 April 1939, and reports followed regularly. The last formal report, the Fifth Report, covered the period of 1 June 1942–31 March 1947. A letter to Elinor Morgenthau dated 10 August 1949 documents continuing support to family members in need. In a three-page letter to Herbert H. Lehman dated 12 March 1952, Dorothy Bernhard writes about ongoing assistance to several families and updates their progress. See boxes 1195–1199, 1329–1330, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.



Carolin Flexner
(Courtesy Hortense Flexner Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of Louisville)

Felix Warburg and Louis Marshall. Lehman served as governor of New York State from 1933 to 1942. With high visibility as a Jew and a philanthropist, he was deluged with requests from relatives and others desperately attempting to flee Nazi Europe.

Lehman's niece, Dorothy Lehman Bernhard, took on the responsibility of assisting over one hundred relatives through a family foundation, the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, at the governor's request. General pleas for assistance from both Jews and non-Jews throughout Europe were handled by Lehman's assistant, Carolin Flexner. The women worked closely together. The task was large, and the decisions they made meant the difference between life and death for hundreds of people. A note from Flexner to Governor Lehman and his response demonstrate their commitment to provide assistance to those fleeing Europe and resettle them in locations worldwide: "Governor, I'm being swamped with appeals on refugees. How much time do you want me to give to them?' 'Spend as much time as you can, because these people are in trouble, and they need help.'"³

On 12 September 1941, Bernhard welcomed Julie Sinn and her family to America's shores: "I want to tell you how glad I am... that you have arrived in the United States. I know you will find it a wonderful land of opportunity... I would like to see you and welcome you personally."⁴ The Sinn family was among the last to land in New York before the flow of refugees was halted, and with just four days left before their visas expired. They arrived on 1 September 1941. Bernhard had been working to get the family to the United States for many years. In the Fourth Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, she explained her exasperation that influenced her decision to spend \$2,004.35—at the time, a fantastically large sum—for their tickets to America.⁵ Bernhard

3 *The Reminiscences of Caroline [sic] Flexner*, 1958 308A Category 1C PRCZ, 2:14, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University.

4 Letter from Dorothy Bernhard to Julie Sinn, 12 September 1941, private collection.

5 "Ruth Gruber Finds Haven for 1,000 Holocaust Refugees," Jewish Women's Archive, <https://jwa.org/thisweek/aug/03/1944/ruth-gruber> and Ruth Gruber, *Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and how they Came to America* (New York: Three Rivers, 2000).

wrote in the report: “The process of getting the above-mentioned seven people to the United States sounds most simple, but it has involved more labor and correspondence and worry in getting these few people here than for all the people who have previously arrived.”

Ludwig Heimann, a grateful recipient of Flexner’s efforts, wrote: “Now we are 15 months here and we are very happy to be in this nice country. We speak so often of Mr. Governor Lehman and you Dear Miss Flexner and we are heartest [*sic*] thankful that you saved my family from the hell.”⁶ Similarly, Felix Ungar wrote: “In all those 7 months, in those 43 days of jail, in the dreadful nights of that time I saw like a twinkling star your help, the affidavit, the possibility to get out Gretl and the children. And now it has come true.”⁷

Dorothy Lehman Bernhard

Bernhard had the familial connections, persistence, and a staff, which allowed her to deftly navigate governmental obstructions and social service bureaucracy in order to advocate on behalf of refugees. She was born into a family of privilege, within the social circle sometimes referred to as “Our Crowd.”⁸ The term, coined by Stephen Birmingham in his 1967 book of that name, refers to the prominent German Jewish families, many of whom lived in New York, who achieved great financial success in the late nineteenth century. Dorothy was the daughter of banker, philanthropist, and communal leader Arthur Lehman and Adele Lewisohn. Although her social and financial position might have allowed her more idle pursuits, she was a philanthropist and leader of communal organizations in her own right, as well as a passionate social reformer and advocate. She “dedicated her time, energy and family wealth to over

6 Letter from Ludwig Heimann to Herbert H. Lehman, September 1939, box 1196, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

7 Letter from Felix Ungar to Herbert H. Lehman, 18 October 1939, box 1330, folder 9, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

8 Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

thirty human service, public welfare, cultural and social organizations.”⁹

Bernhard also took on the overwhelming responsibility of overseeing the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund because her uncle Herbert H. Lehman asked her to. Under her direction, the fund and various family members provided affidavits guaranteeing the financial backing required to obtain visas to the United States for European refugees. She was able to implement the governor’s requests through her ability, with the assistance of her personal staff, to process paperwork efficiently, combined with her knowledge about which refugee service agency to address for further assistance and her connections to relatives who could provide additional connections and employment opportunities.

Carolyn Flexner

Flexner became the governor’s administrator for refugees, but she was an unlikely person to take on this role. Prior to becoming his assistant, she was a kindergarten teacher. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1892, she was one of six children of Jacob Flexner and Rosa Maas. Her family was accomplished, distinguished, and engaged in community service. Her father was a physician and pharmacist. Her uncle Abraham Flexner was best known for his role in reforming medical and higher education in the United States and Canada. Another uncle, Bernhard Flexner, was an attorney active in Zionist causes and one of the founders of the Palestine Economic Corporation. A third uncle, Simon Flexner, was a professor of pathology at the University of Pennsylvania. Her sister Jennie Flexner was a prominent librarian and suffragist. It is no surprise, then, that Carolyn used her intellect and compassion to advance refugee causes and assist refugees.

Herbert H. Lehman heard of Carolyn Flexner through his wife’s sister, Hilda Altschul Master. He reached out to Flexner in 1923 to represent him on a multitude of boards on which he served. At first, she was overwhelmed with the idea of working alongside prominent leaders in the Jewish community.¹⁰ Lehman patiently persuaded her that she was

9 “Dorothy Lehman Bernhard, April 22, 1903–March 6, 1969,” Jewish Women’s Archive, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bernhard-dorothy-lehman>.

10 *Reminiscences*, 2:14.

capable of serving in this capacity, and her help became invaluable to him. He could not attend every meeting, and she became his eyes and ears, providing analysis, as well as notes and observations on what had transpired. Her comments on a meeting early in her career are especially insightful, as they reveal a touch of humor that suggests ease in communicating with her boss:

Yesterday I tossed a coin to see whether I should spend the day being educated by the Palestine Development Council or play around in the country. Palestine won. It was most interesting as I had never met that particular group. Justice Brandeis, whom I had never before met or even heard speak was quite charming. I think his looks impressed me more than his speech for he reminded me a great deal of Abraham Lincoln. His speech dealt with the possibilities of getting Palestine on a sound economic basis, doing away with standards built on receipts of charity and encouraging standards based on stabilized business methods. I liked his personality, his straightforwardness and in spite of his training the idealistic outlook that he kept.

The most forceful and pregnant speech of the afternoon was given by Prof. Frankfurter [*sic*] who spoke on what the P.D.C. stood for. He said nothing particularly new but he said it in quite a different way. His plea was for scrapping the talk and sentimentalism of the past and carrying on the modern methods which the P.D.C. has started. The J.D.C. Reconstruction cooperation was talked of.¹¹

Flexner's role in refugee assistance took on a new dimension in the 1930s, when she assumed the role of coordinating cases for the governor's office. In numerous instances, she extended assistance beyond her official responsibilities. An example is the case of Dr. Theo and Grete Wild. In August 1938, newly-married Salo Theo Wild was tipped off that he was to be arrested, and he fled Austria to Switzerland. His wife, Grete, received a visa for the United States in January 1939 and came

11 Memo from Carolin Flexner to Herbert H. Lehman, 28 May 1923, box 1190, folder 5, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

to New York. From Switzerland, Salo Theo fled to Chile and worked as a farmer. Flexner operated through the National Refugee Service and with several other individuals on his behalf. Flexner also provided a letter of credit. Within weeks of his arrival in the United States in November 1941, he paid back all the money that had been lent to him.

Grete contacted the governor in late 1939. She had been married for only two weeks before her husband fled Vienna to South America. By the time she wrote to the governor, they had been separated for months. Flexner personally provided a refugee affidavit to the United States for Theo using borrowed money—more than she had in the bank. In an interview housed at Columbia University, Flexner said:

Mrs. Lehman sent me a letter from a girl who had been married two weeks in Austria when Hitler came in. The husband's family had sent an affidavit to them, to come. It turned out that Theo Wild, who was the man—Dr. S. Theo Wild—had been born in a part of Austria which was not then Austria. So the little wife had to come, and he had to start on a trek around the world, and this girl was just devastated... I sent for her and she came to see me. She was then working in a factory. She had gone to see lots of people. She had gone to see Arthur Garfield Hays, and Mr. Hays had given her an affidavit for her husband.¹² I talked with Mr. Hays' secretary, and we worked on it for a long time. Every time anybody from the Joint Distribution Committee went to South America, to Chile, I made them go and talk to the consul to get this man a number, because what he needed was a number.

Then finally my secretary met a man downstairs, one of these rich youngsters, who said, "What's new?" She said, "I need a thousand dollars to send to a refugee in Chile, because the consul won't give him a number until he has a thousand dollars in his bank account." So he said, "All right, I'll give you a thousand dollars if Miss Flexner signs the note."

So Miss Flexner, without any thousand dollars in the bank, signed the note... Now he is the official doctor for the Colombian Government and

12 Arthur Garfield Hays was a prominent lawyer and a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union.

the U.N., and he just called me last week and said that he had been given the highest honor that the Colombian Government could give him.”¹³

Flexner took a personal interest in many of the refugees she assisted. She considered their emotional needs and not just their physical well-being. The compassion she displayed, and the financial assistance she gave, exceeded the requirements of her job.

Immigration Process

Although the Lehmans enjoyed privileged positions, they did not have unlimited resources to support and assist immigrants. Adding to the challenge, State Department restrictions controlled the number of affidavits any single individual could provide. Accordingly, they reached out to others in their circle to support their efforts.

In order to sort and vet the dozens of people claiming to be relatives and requesting assistance, Bernhard enlisted her second cousin, Leo Thalheimer, who arrived in the United States in 1939. He helped to confirm these individuals' ties, describe their connections to the Lehmans, and attest to their character. His role was crucial, because the Lehmans had already been in America for almost a century. Mayer Lehman, Dorothy's grandfather, was born in 1830 and immigrated to the United States in 1850. He was the youngest of eight children born over twenty years. Herbert, born in New York in 1878, was the youngest of Mayer's children and had limited knowledge of his cousins in Germany. Having arrived more recently, Thalheimer knew much more about the family still living abroad. Some of the information was provided by his mother, Eva, born in 1856. In a letter Eva wrote to Herbert H. Lehman, she expressed concern for the character of a certain cousin requesting assistance, because there was a family feud dating back to a wedding in 1828. The groom was a Lehman, but she was not sure about the wife's

13 The correspondence in this case is extensive; see box 1330, folder 11, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries. Additional documentation comes from Joan Long Salomon, "Salo Theodore Wild, M.D. and Grete Wild: A Case Study from the Lehman Family Rescue Activities Project," unpublished manuscript, 2012.

character, and she expressed doubts about this branch of the family.

Flexner and Bernhard went beyond facilitating the immigration of refugees. They endeavored to help refugees adjust to many aspects of American life. The Columbia University holdings document the myriad ways in which assistance was given and the work accomplished in cooperation with refugee agencies. In the Second Report, Bernhard explains:

I have handled a great many of these emigration problems with the assistance of the National Council of Jewish Women... our refugee connections have been literally destitute when they stepped off the ship. This causes an added burden of insecurity to these emotionally upset people. I don't need to go into what a tragic experience this is, or the difficulties involved in helping these connections to readjust themselves.

When I hear of a pending arrival of a relative, the method I have followed is to ask some close connection, usually another refugee, to meet the incoming individual, or family, on the dock and make all arrangements for their immediate needs.

Bernhard goes on to explain that she worked closely with Dorothy Levy of the National Refugee Service to coordinate assistance, while the fund supplied whatever financial resources were necessary.¹⁴

Reports and letters credit various immigration and social service organizations for their partnership. The Third Report identifies the Joint Distribution Committee and the Hilfsverein in Germany.¹⁵ The Fourth Report acknowledges a Mr. Negin of the Jewish Social Service Organization, Frances Dryfoos of the National Refugee Service, and various agencies and organizations outside of New York, such as the San Francisco Committee for Service to Emigres, the Jewish Family Welfare Association in Minneapolis, and branches of the National Council for Jewish Women.¹⁶

14 Second Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, pp. 2–3, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

15 Second Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 2, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

16 Fourth Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, pp. 2, 7, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

Bernhard continued to network with cousins who could provide affidavits and support. Richard P. Limburg signed an affidavit for Eugen and Kate Rosenthal.¹⁷ (Eugen Rosenthal had already “been in a concentration camp for a very long time.”) Robert Lehman, president of Lehman Brothers, provided an affidavit for his father’s second cousin’s wife.¹⁸ The Buppenwiesers (Helen Buppenwieser was Bernhard’s sister) supported Julie Stern’s family in New York.¹⁹

Bernhard and Flexner were among those who met arriving refugees at New York’s piers. William Bernhard, Dorothy’s son, recalls his mother’s frequent excursions to greet arriving family members.²⁰ This was only the first of many personal interactions, the initial step in their ongoing individualized assistance.

Americanization

The responsibilities undertaken by both Flexner and Bernhard were extensive. Through refugee organizations, they not only distributed funds but arranged for transportation, education, and housing. They also directly provided support to meet a host of challenges faced by the new arrivals. The range of their activities is described below.

Financial Assistance

The fund provided complete or partial monthly stipends until the refugees could support themselves. They forwarded additional funds either directly or through partner agencies on an emergency basis as needed. In addition to the relatives they themselves sponsored, the Lehmans also assumed responsibility for several families who received affidavits from others but not the financial support they desperately needed.

In one of her periodic reports, Bernhard described the situation of

17 Second Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 12, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

18 Affidavit from Robert Lehman for Lea Lehman, box 1197, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

19 Interview by author with Gary Menkel, husband of Julie Sinn Menkel, 4 August 2010, Queens, New York.

20 Interview by author with William Bernhard, 12 October 2022, New York City.

the Jakob Blum family. The Lehmans had not provided affidavits for the Blums because they were concerned that the family might not become self-supporting. The Blums eventually secured affidavits from the movie producer Carl Laemmle. (Jakob Blum had been a Hebrew teacher and cantor in Ichenhausen, Germany, where Laemmle had grown up decades earlier.) But Laemmle did not provide the financial support the Blums required once they were in the United States, so the Lehmans stepped up.

In time, Blum landed a job in the finance department of Klein's department store in New York. Later, rabbinic positions became available to him in Williamsport, Pennsylvania and Ogdensburg, New York. (It is not clear from Bernhard's report whether the fund took a role in securing these positions for him.) However, Blum turned down those offers. According to his son, Herbert, his father's position at Klein's was secure. He hesitated to accept a job that might be temporary or could be lost, and would leave his family destitute.²¹

The Lehmans not only provided financial support but also invested in refugees. Arthur Heimann and his wife desired to establish a candy-making business, and they launched the Mignon Chocolate Company from their apartment. In June 1939, Bernhard recognized the potential of the couple and brought in Mr. Negin of the Jewish Social Services Association (today the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services) as an advisor to draw up a business plan. The Lehmans invested \$5,000 in the company—a significant sum at the time—and larger additional amounts later on.²²

Employment and Training

Many placements were made by refugee organizations with whom Bernhard and Flexner worked—and not only locally. They looked for positions for the new arrivals outside New York City, where more job opportunities were available, especially in medical and academic professions. Bernhard arranged for nineteen-year-old Ludwig Stern to participate in a National Youth Administration Project in Minnesota, and the

21 Interview by author with Herbert Blum, 8 October 2012, New York City.

22 Second Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 6, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

fund paid for the program.²³ Bernhard gave Else Sinn a letter of recommendation for the designer house Hattie Carnegie, Inc. in order for her to learn dressmaking.²⁴ For some immigrants, they arranged programs to improve their English language skills and further job opportunities. They also provided information for those whose fields required recertification, such as doctors, to help them complete the required exams. Bernhard and Flexner also wrote inquiries and recommendations on behalf of the refugees. In some cases, family members had lost jobs or sought positions more suited to their abilities, at which point the two women went into action for a “second round” (or further rounds).

They drew on their networks to aid them in this work. Gunter Lehman was a distant relative who did not request assistance, yet, when Flexner learned of his efforts to sell stationery products, she reached out to possible purchasers including her relatives—the Buttenwiesers—and the firms Wertheim and Kuhn Loeb.²⁵ Lehman family connections were sometimes far removed. For example, Eric (alternately, Erich) and Lee Gerst were related only through marriage. Their father, Ernst, was a brother of Hans Gerst and husband of Irma Silberman, and a physician. Irma’s grandmother was a sister of Mayer Lehman’s wife, Babette Neugass. In 1937, Eric, age nineteen, was the first in his family to arrive in the United States; his mother Anni followed in 1938 with his sister Lee, a year younger than Eric.²⁶ Flexner attempted to assist Anni with the extension of her visitor’s visa, but without success.²⁷ Anni was forced to return to Germany, leaving her two children to fend for themselves. Flexner counseled the young adults in many ways. She wrote letters of

23 Third Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, section 1, p. 7, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

24 Second Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 9, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

25 Box 1329 C-17-171, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

26 Liselotte Gerst passenger record, arrival date 22 Dec 1939 in New York City, identifying her brother, Eric Girst [*sic*], as the relative she is joining in the United States. Access through Ancestry.com.

27 Letter from Carolin Flexner to Eric Gerst, 23 December 1938, box 1195, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

introduction for Lee, who in time secured a position in the laboratory of Beth Israel Hospital. She also helped find Lee clothing suitable for her position, even providing her with a purse. In addition, she sent introductions for Eric, who thanked her for “taking care of her [his sister] like a mother.”²⁸ When their father arrived in 1941, together with Anni, she reached out to find a position for him in the medical field.²⁹

Requests on Behalf of Family Members

Once in America, many refugees immediately initiated efforts to assist other family members in their efforts to emigrate. Often, requests came for relatives of spouses of Lehmans, for in-laws of refugees, or for their nieces or nephews who were not directly related to the Lehman family. Before *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, the family was open to taking on responsibilities on behalf of these more distant connections. As the number of requests increased dramatically in the aftermath of the pogrom, however, they declined them, reserving their limited opportunities in order to assist direct blood relatives. With each affidavit issued, the Lehmans took on financial responsibility. By 1938, they were already providing significant funds for many relatives unable to support themselves in the United States. Dr. Erich Kaufman arrived with an affidavit from the Lehmans in March 1938. He was a nephew of a cousin's spouse, not directly related by blood. He became a physician at Mount Sinai Hospital. Shortly after his arrival, he requested affidavits for his parents, who would have been elderly, and Bernhard refused his request.³⁰

28 Letter from Eric Gerst to Carolin Flexner, 17 January 1940, box 129, folder 1, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

29 Dr. Ernst Gerst was sixty-two when he arrived in the United States. Obtaining a medical license would have been difficult, and Flexner was inquiring about a position as a companion or assistant. Letter from Carolin Flexner to Fanny Lissauer Mendelsohn at Mount Sinai Hospital, 27 October 1941, box 1195, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

30 Third Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 5, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

Maintaining Dignity

Many of the newly arrived relatives had shipped their worldly possessions from Europe in “lifts,” or large shipping containers. In America, their new homes were modest at best, and their belongings had to be placed in storage, but few refugees had an income or savings that could cover this expense. Flexner not only saw to it that the expense was covered but also managed the logistics. As another illustration of her sensitivity to the wide-ranging emotional needs of the refugees, Flexner arranged a car for the funeral of Emma Stein’s brother-in-law.³¹

Flexner also arranged for food to be sent to Dora Edinger. An academic who had served as editor of *Die Logenschwester* in Germany prior to the war, she had difficulty supporting herself after arriving in the United States in the mid-1930s. In a letter to the Community Service Society of New York, Flexner thanked the organization for its shipment of food to Edinger. She explained that “[Edinger] would be devastated to know that the basket came from a charitable organization.” Flexner had signed the receipt for the package and sent it on to Edinger anonymously with a note wishing her: “Merry Christmas.”³²

Education

Finding appropriate educational opportunities for the refugees proved challenging, but in some cases, there were job training options, as with Ernst Silberman, who trained at the Modern Bake and Pastry School. In 1937, the fund paid for an accounting course for Justin Selig; after completing the course, he was able to find employment and became

31 Letter from Emma Stein thanking Carolin Flexner for arranging the car, 30 March 1942, box 1197, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

32 Box 1199 C-17 150, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries. See also Dora Edinger Collection at the Leo Baeck Institute, Center for Jewish History, <https://archives.cjh.org//repositories/5/resources/15124>. Edinger was a well-known intellectual. There is a recommendation by Rabbi Leo Baeck for her in the Leo Baeck Institute collection, as well as a letter from Martin Buber, and one by Eric M. Warburg to her acknowledging the value of her book on Bertha Pappenheim.

self-supporting.³³ The governor provided tuition support to Marlene Ungar, a relative of his wife, Edith Altschul, shortly after her arrival in the United States, albeit through personal funding, not the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund. At the time, she was attending the Horace Mann School for Girls. This support was unknown to Ungar.³⁴

Medical and Continuing Expenses

The Lehmans continued to support some of their relatives decades after their arrival in America. According to Bernhard in her Fifth Report to the family from 1947, Hedwig Haas, a distant cousin, arrived in America via China and settled in Seattle, Washington.³⁵ For some years, Haas worked in the medical department of the Boeing Company, but a hemorrhage in an eye left her with serious vision impairment. Bernhard sent her an unsolicited gift of \$200 to cover some of her expenses.

In 1949 Bernhard wrote to her cousin Elinor Morgenthau about the families who had been self-supporting but for various reasons required additional financing. Until that time, funds had been distributed through social service agencies such as the Jewish Family Service (formerly the Jewish Social Service Association). By the end of the 1940s, these organizations had refocused their missions and turned over relief efforts to the Department of Welfare. The Lehmans were hesitant to send family connections for public assistance. They hired a social worker privately to address the needs of a handful of relatives.³⁶

Hans Gerst (uncle of Eric and Lee, discussed above) and his wife Irma (daughter of Herbert H. Lehman's first cousin Pauline Steinheimer Silberman) were very close to their American cousins. In fact, Bernhard

33 First report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 8, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

34 Email from Marlene Griffith Bagdikian to the author, 20 December 2010. Marlene was later married to Ben Bagdikian, known for his role in bringing the Watergate scandal and the Pentagon Papers to public attention.

35 Fifth Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 1, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

36 Letter from Bernhard to Elinor Morgenthau, 10 August 1949, collection of Joan Morgenthau Hirschhorn.

writes in the Fifth Report that these cousins had received support even prior to their immigration.³⁷ In October 1945, the Gersts were hit by a car and Irma spent many months in a hospital. The Lehmans covered their medical bills.

The Gersts' daughter, Thea-Marie, who was brought over as a child, died of cancer in 1974 at the age of forty-four, leaving behind two young children. The Lehmans supported Thea's family after her death. In 1972, Edith Altschul Lehman, Herbert H. Lehman's widow, wrote a touching letter to Helen Buttenwieser, who had taken over responsibility for the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund following her sister Dorothy's death in 1969. Edith urged Helen to continue support for this family, writing: "She [Thea-Marie] worries about the future if anything should happen to her... You will make note of this, I know, just in case I am not here, or Thea should not be here." Edith herself died three years later.³⁸

Conclusion

The Herbert H. Lehman Papers at Columbia University Libraries provide a unique lens into the complexity of immigration and resettlement processes. Flexner and Bernhard relied upon a vast array of social service organizations, as well as a network of family and business associates, to secure financial support, sponsorship, jobs, advice, and business and personal connections. These two women went further to build personal relationships with refugees, and find ways to help them secure employment, housing, social services, and medical care, and in some cases even establish businesses. They supported Americanization in a difficult environment.

Flexner and Bernhard knew that this work would gnaw at their souls. Both participated in the decision-making regarding who would be selected to receive an affidavit—a ticket to freedom, whose connections to the family were too remote, whose character did not portend a successful integration into American life, and even those for whom their efforts would be

37 Fifth Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 5, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

38 Letter from Edith Altschul Lehman to Helen Buttenwieser, box 1199, folder 1, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

too late. The personal toll on the lives of Flexner and Bernhard cannot be known in any definitive way. Surely, they must have felt some satisfaction in their successes but also deep pain from their inability to help everyone in need. Flexner ends a letter to Governor Lehman dated 4 October 1937: "I had no idea that you would consider doing this and I must admit that your letter gave me a real thrill of joy. I was so low in my mind after I had to tell Mrs. Gumbrich about my being unable to help her and then your grand letter came along and put hope into the whole situation."³⁹

As part of her oral history at Columbia University, Flexner was asked: "As far as you know, did all the Lehman family get out of Germany?" Her response was, "I think so, yes. I don't think they have ever heard of any people who were killed."⁴⁰ Perhaps she misunderstood the question or had another reason for responding in this way, for, while it is true that no close relations by the name of Lehman were murdered, the governor's first cousin, Eva Lehman Thalheimer, died in Theresienstadt. She was the mother of Leo Thalheimer, Lehman's adviser on family members in Germany before and during the war.⁴¹

Flexner was quite familiar with the Thalheimer case, as well as with many others. She had personally drafted dozens of letters to relatives whom the governor was unable to assist. Many had to be refused after the State Department began limiting the number of affidavits that could be issued by any one individual. In addition, as conditions deteriorated in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Flexner drafted letters to hundreds of unrelated individuals desperate to flee countries throughout Europe. Their appeals were heartrending. In one such case, a friend of the family stated that, although there was no blood relation, "my grandfather was buried next to your grandfather" in the Jewish cemetery of Rimpar. It could well have been the case that, despite the large number of refugees

39 Benno Gumbrich was not directly related to the Lehmans, and they did not provide an affidavit. Gumbrich did, however, get to the United States with the assistance of other relatives; see box 1329, file 161-59, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

40 *Reminiscences*, 2:14.

41 First Report of the Mayer Lehman Charity Fund, p. 7, box 1198, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

she aided, it was too emotionally fraught for Flexner to accept the fates of those whom she was unable to rescue.

Through the fund, family support to the relatives they brought to America continued, in some cases through the 1970s. Otto Stern, who had been given an affidavit by Arthur Lehman in 1935, became an invalid from multiple sclerosis. In 1970, after the death of Stern's wife, Helen Bittenwieser coordinated his care through the Jewish Family Services.⁴²

Refugees expressed gratitude in beautiful letters, such as one from Hugo and Else Ehrmann, who wrote regarding the affidavits given to their family: "By your noble deed you have done us a benefit that can be esteemed only by persons in our condition, who must leave their country and don't know where to find a new home."⁴³ Philipp Selig wrote: "Only those that have lived as we have, all alone for years in a small town can understand what the words 'affidavit mailed' mean to me. ... Be assured that I shall always try to live up to your expectations... May God reward you and your dear ones for your help."⁴⁴

Descriptions of gifts noted in the reports also point to their gratitude. The Fifth Report indicates that the Rosenthals sent a box of candied fruit every Christmas, the Blums sent cakes and candies, and Justin Selig sent a box of pears. I asked Robert Bernhard, Dorothy's elder son, if he remembered eating the bounty each December. He replied: "My mother was the original re-gifter."⁴⁵ William Bernhard, Robert's younger brother, was too young to remember the gifts, but he said that, until recently, he had never understood the extent of his mother's dedication to her extended family. His involvement in this ongoing research has broadened his understanding of his mother's work.

42 Letter from Helen L. Bittenwieser to Frances L. Beatman, Jewish Family Services with regard to Otto Stern, 22 December 1970, box 1197, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

43 Letter from Hugo Ehrmann and Else Ehrmann to Dorothy Bernhard, 5 March 1939, box 1195, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

44 Letter from Philipp Selig to Dorothy Bernhard from Gerolzhofen/Mainfranken, 28 December 1938, box 1329, C17-173, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

45 Interview by author with Robert Bernhard, November 18, 2012, New York City.

Flexner's work in this capacity has never been properly acknowledged. Her career with refugees continued even after Lehman's tenure as governor ended. In the few articles that refer to her, her name is misspelled, including a *New York Times* article in 1944, which noted that she served as Lehman's representative on various committees and undertook extensive work for UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.⁴⁶ The 1958 oral history at Columbia also spells her name incorrectly, as does a Jewish Virtual Library page.⁴⁷ At least a 1945 article in the *Courier-Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, does spell it correctly. That publication notes her work as the deputy director of camps for UNRRA.⁴⁸ There is no biography of her in the Jewish Women's Archive. Few photographs of her could be found. The efforts of Bernhard and Flexner to save and improve the lives of hundreds were remarkable. Their efforts received little public recognition in their own lifetimes or in the decades since. This article should draw further attention to their legacy.

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Assistance for this article was provided by Esther Brumberg, former Senior Curator of Collections, Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

46 "Caroline Flexner Long Lehman Aide," *New York Times* (3 January 1944): 18.

47 "Jennie Maas Flexner, 1882–1944," Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jennie-maas-flexner>.

48 Donie Carmack, "Back from Balkans, Neville Miller Warns That Relief Must Not Lag," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville) (6 May 1945): section 3, p. 3.

Regionalism

MARK K. BAUMAN*

I have written and edited works about southern Jewish history for forty-five years. I supported the southern distinctiveness school of historiography until two editors questioned whether what I had submitted to them was unique. This forced me to read Jewish histories of cities outside of the region to compare their experiences with those I was describing for Atlanta. I found far more similarities than differences in communities of similar size and nature.

One might ask, then, why concentrate on the South or, for that matter, the West or any section? I suggest at least three answers. First, so many important people lived and actions occurred in the South that, arguably, one cannot truly understand American Jewish history without integrating the study of Jews and Judaism in the region. This holds true of other regions as well. Historians of western and New England Jewry, for example, put those experiences forward as models for the future. Second, exaggerating regional idiosyncrasies marginalizes the importance of their Jewish history. Recognizing commonalities accentuates the powerful impact of cultural baggage on Jewish adaptation. It also highlights the significance of family, religion, business, and Jewish organizational life linkages. Jews were—and are—highly mobile. Individuals moved from place to place, and family members thereby dispersed, blurring regional boundaries. National Jewish newspapers edited by Isaac Leeser, Isaac Mayer Wise, and others during the nineteenth century and beyond routinely included articles by local people from throughout the country. National organizations like the B'nai B'rith had regional divisions, but local members remained abreast of national and international events, attended national conferences, and held important national leadership positions. Third, to write a truly national history, one cannot assume that New York Jewry represented the national model. The historian learns, for one, that, outside of industrial cities like New York and Chicago, Eastern European Jews did not work in the sweatshops of the garment industry, unionize, or strike, nor did they view socialism as any more than a subject of intellectual debate.

How different American Jewish economic history looks when the historian notes that—whether in association with the cash crop farms, plantations, and later textile mills in the South; the cattle and oil industries in Texas and Oklahoma; the gold strikes in California and Alaska; or any other location outside of the industrial cities—virtually no Jews worked as laborers extracting the raw materials. Rather, they provided the goods and services required by the workers and businesses.¹ How different the history of organizational Jewish life appears when one recognizes that Jewish Sunday schools; Hebrew benevolent societies; every male, female, and youth order and agency; federations of Jewish charities and welfare funds; Jewish education alliances and community centers; Zionist organizations; synagogues affiliated with Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Chabad movements; and defense agencies spread throughout the country very quickly. These organizations expanded their webs because of personal ties and organizational actions that then further linked people and communities together.

How boundaries disappear when tracing family and business movements back and forth across and between regions, as well as to Europe and the Caribbean. When British occupation disrupted American and specifically Jewish lives during the American Revolution, Jews transplanted from New York and Charleston were instrumental in the liturgical development at Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel. Take, for example, the first two major Jewish philanthropists. Judah Touro started in Newport, where his father served as minister, then moved to New Orleans, where he made his fortune. Gershom Kursheedt started from New York before settling in New Orleans and later ventured to the Holy Land, and then England. Kursheedt's travels influenced Touro's will, which

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1 Michael Hoberman, *How Strange it Seems: Cultural Life of Jews in Small-Town New England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 21 identifies these same trends in rural New England.

bequeathed money to Jewish organizations up and down the East Coast and in Palestine. Rosanna Dyer Osterman started in Baltimore before moving to Galveston, where she and her brother established the city's Jewish institutions. Her Dutch-born husband, Joseph, used his contacts in Baltimore and Holland for his import-export business. When she died, her bequests mirrored those of Touro. Jews from Baltimore and Charleston like the Dyers and Ostermans fanned out across the country for economic opportunity and founded congregations along the way to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and into the Northwest. Certainly, local and regional differences appear. Tracing commonalities, linkages, and mobility can nonetheless provide a sweeping panorama of a truly national (and transatlantic) American Jewish history.

In the following pages I will discuss the difficulties of defining regions and then summarize and finally challenge regional distinctive historiography in the South and the West, the two most fully developed regions. I will then discuss two recent works on New England Jewry. Rather than belying the importance of the Jewish experiences in the various regions, I call for historians to overcome a provincial perspective—whether it be of New York, the West, the South, New England, or anywhere else—to learn about and integrate all American Jewry.

Attempting to Define Regions

Natural and human environments influence individuals and groups to varying degrees. People bring with them cultural baggage—factors in their prior experiences, beliefs, and habits—that impact how much or how little and in what ways they adapt to these environments. In terms of American Jewish history, these environments may be local, regional, national, and even international. This article analyzes the definition, concept, and use of region as a theme in American Jewish history. In so doing, it raises major questions concerning the use and limitations of this approach.

Regions and Regionalism

American historians recognize the concept of region: the South, Midwest, Southwest, West, North, New England, and the Middle

Atlantic states.² (Note the substantial overlap in these categories.) The concept is almost as old as the historical profession within the country, as Frederick Jackson Turner stressed democracy and individualism along the western frontier and the William A. Dunning school and Ulrich B. Phillips glorified the plantation South and slavery while vilifying Reconstruction. Although these interpretations have been discredited, others have taken their place.³

In contrast, the first historians of American Jewry tended to eschew region as a category of analysis. Mostly amateurs, these individuals often associated with the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) from its founding in 1892. The second generation was more taken by Jacob Rader Marcus's hypothesis emphasizing waves of immigration. Only during the 1970s did historians identify the South and West as distinct places of Jewish life worthy of serious—and separate—study.⁴

2 American historians, however, only point to substantial region divisions following the late 1820s and early 1830s. By about 1832 or 1833, the impact of the cotton gin introduced during the 1790s and better quality cotton in the South and the growing industrial revolution in the North contributed to regionally diverse economic systems. This, in turn, contributed to major policy differences—for example, overprotective tariffs. Gradual emancipation, the growing militancy of abolitionists in the northern states, Nat Turner's Rebellion, and the last debates over gradual emancipation in Maryland and Virginia (with the southern position concerning slavery shifting from a necessary evil to a positive good) reflected and hardened the divide.

3 Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Vantage, 1968); Wilbur R. Jacobs, *On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994); Michael C. Steiner, "From Frontier to Region: Frederick Jackson Turner and the New Western History," *Pacific Historical Review* 64 (November 1995): 479–501; John David Smith, ed., *The Dunning School: Historians, Race and the Meaning of Reconstruction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); Merton L. Dillon, *Ulrich Bonnell Phillips: Historian of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); John Herbert Roper, *U.B. Phillips: A Southern Mind* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984).

4 Jacob Rader Marcus, "The Periodization of American Jewish History," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 47, no. 3 (1958): 1–9; Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, 4 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989–1993). Historians

The earliest historians of Jewish regionalism tried to explain why their area was worth studying and to introduce to readers elsewhere that there actually were Jews present from an early period in the development of their respective sections of the country. They asked what made their section distinctive rather than evaluating it on its own merits. This led inexorably to comparisons with the North, but as defined by metropolitan New York and not as a diverse region.⁵

have since come to realize far more overlap and complexity than Marcus envisioned. See, e.g., Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). For changes in historiography, see Mark K. Bauman, "A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 59 (2007): 3–78, republished in Bauman, *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), 312–360; Moses Rischin and John Livingston, eds., *Jews of the American West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 18. The Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS), launched in 1976, emphasized southern Jewish distinctiveness during its first two decades. Since then, the biggest conflict in the field relates to this issue. The Western States Jewish History Society (later changed from Society to Association), established in 1983 in the wake of a schism with the original Southern California Jewish Historical Society, published a quarterly journal, *Western States Jewish History*, from 1968 to 2018 (formerly *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*). The journal was subsequently reestablished as a biannual, peer-reviewed publication, *Western Jewish History*, under the editorship of Jonathan Friedmann. The WSJHS was preceded in 1967 by the Western Jewish History Center, sponsored by the Judah L. Magnes Museum, which is now associated with the University of California, Berkeley. The first conference on western Jewish history took place in Berkeley in 1977 and resulted in the publication of Moses Rischin, ed, *The Jews of the West: The Metropolitan Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). The Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1976. An earlier, short-lived SJHS published three journal issues (1958, 1959, 1963). The more recent society launched *Southern Jewish History* in 1988, which remains an annual, peer-reviewed publication. The Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston was created in 2014. The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest was established in 1984, and its journal first appeared in 2002. The Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and Mid-South began in 1986 as a child of the SJHS after that society held a conference in Memphis. Joel Gereboff and Jonathan L. Friedman, eds, *Jewish Historical Societies: Navigating the Professional-Amateur Divide* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2023).

⁵ See, e.g., Harry Golden, *Our Southern Landsman* (New York: Putnam, 1974); Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); Carolyn Lipson-Walker, "Shalom Y'All: The Folklore and Culture of Southern

In American Jewish history arguments are made for distinctive southern, western, Midwestern, southwestern, and New England regions.⁶ Yet regions are often ill-defined and amorphous, with little consistency in categorization. The West is fragmented by Rocky Mountain history centered in Denver and Pacific coast history that stresses coastal cities with large Jewish enclaves. Both constructs leave Idaho, Nevada, Utah, the Dakotas, and Alaska somewhat as orphans.⁷ The journal *Western Jewish History* overcomes this obstacle by including all states west of the Mississippi River—over half the country. Yet this circumscribes the scope of its predecessor, *Western States Jewish History*, which added western Canada, sections of Mexico, and the Pacific Rim.⁸ When discussing a northern region, one does not necessarily associate it with the states that supported the Union during the Civil War so much as

Jews” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1986). In each of these, the authors tend to compare southern Reform Jews of central European origin with Eastern European Orthodox Jews in New York. For a critique of New York as the paradigm of American Jewish history, see Marc Lee Raphael, “Beyond New York,” in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 52–65. Raphael emphasizes the use of local histories to obtain a more accurate picture of the whole.

6 On the Southwest, see Floyd S. Fierman, *Guts and Ruts: The Jewish Pioneer on the Trail in the American Southwest* (New York: KTAV, 1984); Fierman, *Roots and Boots: From Crypto-Jew in New Spain to Community Leader in the American Southwest* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1987). The University of Arizona houses the Southwest Jewish Archives; its website includes “Suggested Readings,” <https://swja.library.arizona.edu/content/suggested-readings>. The designated states—Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas—further muddle regional definitions and identifications.

7 The Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society hosted the second Western Jewish History Conference. The resulting anthology, Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, included an article on Tucson, Arizona, by Leonard Dinnerstein, thereby conflating the West, Rocky Mountains, and Southwest. States like Texas create even more problems in that they are considered southern and western, and Jewish residents identify with both. On this issue in general, see Ty Cashion, *Lone Star Mind: Reimagining Texas History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018). Historians of Texas Jewry discuss southern, western, Texan, and Jewish identity. See Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, eds., *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2007).

8 Jonathan Freidmann, e-mail to author, 11 July 2021.

imagine New York City as the North. Whereas a three-volume history of New York Jewish history has been published, no one has compiled an anthology on northern Jewish history.⁹ In contrast, two anthologies have appeared on the western Jewish experience,¹⁰ and five have focused on the Jewish South.¹¹ Consequently, historians compare and contrast experiences of other regions with that of an atypical metropolis and often ignore those who lived in the small towns and small cities of the North.

9 Deborah Dash Moore, ed., *City of Promises: A History of the Jews of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). Howard B. Rock, Annie Pollard and Daniel Soyer, and Jeffrey S. Gurock wrote the three individual volumes in the *City of Promise* series.

10 Books on the Jewish West include Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*; Rischin, *Jews of the West*; Ellen Eisenberg, Ava F. Kahn, and William Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Ava Kahn, ed., *Jewish Life in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Kahn and Marc Dollinger, eds., *California Jews* (Hanover: University Press of New England and Brandeis University Press, 2003); Harriet Rochlin and Fred Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); I. Harold Sharfman, *Jews on the Frontier: An Account of Jewish Pioneers and Settlers in Early America* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1977). All of these emphasize western Jewish regional distinctiveness. However, Robert A. Goldberg, "Zion in Utah: The Clarion Colony and Jewish Agrarianism," in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, finds little difference between such utopian communities throughout the country. His conclusions parallel those of Arnold Shankman, "Happyville, the Forgotten Colony," *American Jewish Archives* (April 1978): 3–19, which discusses a similar agricultural experiment in South Carolina.

11 Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, eds., *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky, eds., *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1979); Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern, eds., *Jews of the South* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984); Mark K. Bauman, ed., *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006); Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg, eds., *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006). With the exception of my anthology, all of these emphasize southern Jewish regional distinctiveness. A sixth anthology, Abraham D. Lavender, ed., *A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Subcommunities in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood, 1977) includes a section on the South but does not emphasize distinctiveness.

Little had been made of New England Jewish regional history until relatively recently. The New England Jewish Historical Society, begun in 2013, published *Bar Harbor Babylon* in 2019 and *New England's Hidden Past* in 2002, both through Rowman and Littlefield's Downeast Books division. Several city and state Jewish historical organizations launched the New England Jewish Historical Collaboration in 2019. It, like the historical society, falls under the auspices of the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (formerly the AJHS-New England Archive) at the New England Jewish Historic Genealogical Center.¹²

The problem of defining a region also applies to the South. Is the Jewish South defined by the census, the states that formed the Confederacy, or the prevalence of slavery after emancipation in the North and de jure segregation? If the latter, Delaware, Oklahoma, and Missouri become part of the Jewish South, as does the US military, since it was not desegregated until the Korean War.

Whereas variations appear between regions, they also surface within them. The Jewish histories of Atlanta, Charleston, Charlottesville, Knoxville, Memphis, New Orleans, Raleigh-Durham, and the small towns of Louisiana and North Carolina exhibit similarities but also explicit differences. The same holds true for Los Angeles and San Francisco, the two major cities within one Pacific Coast state.¹³

Since the western and southern Jewish experiences have been most defined as regions, focus on those stories appears appropriate. A shorter section on the less developed historiography of New England Jewry will follow. The case for each will appear in broad brushstrokes, then compared along with suggestions concerning the weaknesses of each. By doing so, I raise questions and concerns about the use of regionalism as

12 "Our Mission," Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center, <https://jewishheritagecenter.org/mission>; "About Us," New England Historical Society, <https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/about-us/>; New England Jewish History Collaborative, <https://www.nejhc.org>.

13 Ellen Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Down Injustice? Western Jews and Japanese Removal during WWII* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008) depicts the similarities and many differences between how Jews in Los Angeles and San Francisco responded to Japanese removal and internment during World War II.

an analytical tool. However, I do not argue that regional environments were inconsequential. Rather, I suggest that similarities with similar types of communities are too often marginalized, as are variations within regions associated with local factors.

The Western Jewish Distinctiveness School

William Toll establishes a case for regional distinctiveness in an essay on Jews of the Pacific Coast. He emphasizes that, “along the Pacific Coast, Jewish newcomers understood that they were travelling through vast landscapes far removed from the rest of the nation and facing unprecedented civic challenges as regional pioneers.” Although their business activities reflected those of Jews throughout the United States, here, unlike elsewhere, they viewed themselves as pioneers. From the gold rush of 1849 into World War I, San Francisco served as the Jewish hub. Jews throughout the region participated in a variety of entrepreneurial pursuits that benefited from chain migration and the provision of credit from earlier settlers to newcomers. By 1880, “Jewish families had become mercantile anchors of the region’s new commercial towns,” and their stores lined main business streets. Jews like I. Hellman emerged as major bankers, while others led cultural development.

Jews developed mutual aid societies and B’nai B’rith lodges, and erected synagogue structures reflecting their high status. Excluded from elite social clubs, they formed Concordia societies that were nonetheless listed on social registers. Scions of earlier settlers viewed their status as superior to that of Jews in the East. With the influx of Eastern European Orthodox Jews and Sephardim, federations were formed that included these groups. Reform rabbis became ambassadors to secular society.

Each immigrant wave established small businesses rather than seeking employment as factory or manual labor. The specialty stores of earlier settler families morphed into department stores and chains. When an earthquake and firestorm devastated San Francisco, area Jews cared for the needs of their brethren. The new immigrants lived in poorer sections of the cities that also housed other immigrant/minority groups. The immigrants from the 1880s and 1890s gradually acculturated only to be augmented by more recent—and Orthodox—immigrants, who in later decades created traditional institutions, including those stressing Orthodox education.

By the 1920s, over half the Jewish population on the coast lived in Los Angeles amidst the growth of the movie, oil, sportswear, and other industries. This included clothing manufacturing, although, unlike New York, most workers were Mexican rather than Jewish. Numerous conventions of national Jewish organizations took place there as Jewish civic leaders stressed brotherhood and civic service to cement the Jewish role in secular society. The receptions they received “made Jews of the West believe that their status in this newest region of the new land remained unique.” Second generation immigrants acted in a fashion that “reinforced their image as pillars of civic stability.” Regardless of powerful Republican politicians like Abe Ruef in San Francisco and Joseph Simon in Portland, Jews tended to participate in political and civic affairs in a nonpartisan fashion.¹⁴

Jewish businesses, homes, synagogues, and other institutions often located in clusters within easy walking distance, much like New York, although Jews never formed the majority in a neighborhood as they did in the latter city. Instead, their lives were intertwined with those of other immigrant minorities. Gradually, during the interwar years, they moved to the suburbs, although they continued the pattern of residential clustering.

Jewish women created organizations that gradually shifted names and missions in accordance with changing community needs. Many moved from volunteer activities into professional social work often associated with social settlement houses. Professionals gradually, yet inexorably assumed leadership within Jewish social service organizations. By the mid-1920s Jews ranked second only to Catholics in terms of religious groups in several cities in the region. By 1960 the Jewish population of Los Angeles ranked second to New York. World War II and postwar prosperity, business opportunities, and retirement communities spurred the growth of Jewish urban populations and communal institutions.¹⁵

14 Ruef controlled San Francisco politics from 1901 until his conviction for corruption in 1908. Simon served on the Portland City Council, then the Oregon Senate where he often sat as president before becoming a U.S. Senator (1989–1903), and finally as mayor of Portland (1909–1911). Both men worked as attorneys.

15 William Toll, “A Regional Context for Pacific Jewry, 1880–1930,” in *The Columbia*

A groundbreaking anthology treating the subject, *Jews of the American West*, edited by Moses Rischin and John Livingston, posits three distinctive departures from the New York paradigm of American Jewish history. The first departed from the traditional periodization associated with immigration waves to suggest 1848–1890 as the time of initial, pioneering settlement; 1890–1941 as reflecting a decline in immigration and relatively small influx of Jews from Eastern Europe; and 1941–present as symbolizing renewed Jewish migration westward. In essence, internal migration replaced the movement of immigrants into the country as the defining characteristic. The tide (1849–1890), ebb (1890–1941), and renewed tide (1941–present) of migration westward responded to eras of greater and lesser economic opportunity. As Rischin avers, the Jewish West went from cosmopolitan to provincial and then returned to cosmopolitan. The second differentiating feature contrasts the small number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the region and their lesser influence relative to their counterparts in the Northeast. Nonetheless, those who did travel west behaved in many ways much like their counterparts in the northeastern cities. The third area of regional distinctiveness is the relative absence of antisemitism in the West. Livingston documents the latter with the welcome received by pioneering Jewish merchants, widespread election to public office, and acceptance of San Francisco Jews into elite social circles after Jews in New York had been excluded. With major Jewish populations concentrating in San Francisco and then Los Angeles, where Jews provided major national and international leadership, western states Jewry should clearly be defined as cosmopolitan and urban according to these editors.¹⁶

History of Jews and Judaism in America, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 217–245, 218 (quotations one and two), 220 (quotation 3), 221 (quotation 4).

¹⁶ John Livingston, “Introduction,” in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 20–22. For the cosmopolitan and urban nature of western Jewish history, see 27–29; Rischin, “The Jewish Experience in America,” Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 30–47; Fred Rosenbaum, *Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Raphael, “Beyond New York” expands on the second defining factor by arguing that, unlike cities in the East, the few Orthodox Jewish immigrants and their third- and

In many respects, *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge* by Ellen Eisenberg, Ava F. Kahn, and Toll mirrors the themes in the two earlier volumes. As they write in the preface, “we uncovered the distinctive roles that Jews have always played in the region, how they created for themselves a series of regional networks, financial, religious, and philanthropic, and how they interacted with non-Jews to create a unique status” (xi).

The authors of this work stress the need to recognize the importance of western Jewish history as an alternate to the American Jewish experience—yet an integral component of that experience—in contrast to an eastern and specifically New York-centered narrative. Pioneering status and early settlement; regional geography (especially separation from the rest of the nation and particularly the eastern cities, as well as the prevalence of cities); disproportionate contributions; integration into society; interaction of Jews and their communities within the relatively isolated region; western identity; regional religious and ethnic diversity (albeit with a relative small Black population until after World War II); early and rapid acculturation (including low rates of affiliation, as well as high rates of intermarriage and religious innovation); and a frontier environment and mindset stand out as distinctive factors in western states Jewish history. To these authors, “starting with the Gold Rush, Jews of the Pacific West were to persist in the creation of a distinctive regional way of life.” Their argument continues: “the timing of settlement and the social, political, religious, ethnic, and economic climate of the cities and towns in which communities developed profoundly influenced regional identities for Jews as for other westerners.” Furthermore, the West, compared to other regions of the United States, developed a civic culture—founded in part by Jews—that proved to be particularly welcoming and attractive to new Jewish arrivals. Self-selected Jews, more daring and with greater religious flexibility, used family connections and geographical mobility to rise economically in a relatively open society, and they disproportionately contributed to civic development and

fourth-generation descendants moved to the West to acculturate rather than to retain tradition. However, Jeanne Abrams, “Chasing the Cure in Colorado,” in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 95–115 questions Raphael’s conclusion.

improvement. Jews viewed the West as their Promised Land. The Jewish West was marked by diversity, economic and geographical mobility, institution-building, interconnectivity, and center/satellite (or periphery) community relationships.¹⁷

The Southern Jewish Distinctiveness School

The distinctiveness school of southern Jewish historiography largely began as the subfield gained renewed momentum during the 1970s. The first works included popular histories by Harry Golden and Eli Evans, as well as three anthologies.¹⁸ Additional research has expanded on the early themes even as the concept of southern Jewish distinctiveness confronted challengers.¹⁹

17 Eisenberg, Kahn, and Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast*, 3, 4, 5, (for quotations in order).

18 Golden, *Our Southern Landsman*; Evans, *Provincials*; Dinnerstein and Palsson, eds., *Jews*; Kaganoff and Urofsky, *Turn*; Proctor, Schmier, and Stern, *Jews*. See also Lipson-Walker, "Shalom"; Carolyn Lipson-Walker, "It's All Relative: The Study of Southern Jewish Culture and Identity," *Shofar* 8, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 3–29; Lipson-Walker, "Weddings among Jews in the Post-World War II American South," in *Creative Ethnicity*, ed. Stephen Stern and Allan Cicala (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1991), 171–185; Morris N. Kertzer, "Magnolia Judaism," *Today's American Jews*, ed. Morris Kertzer (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 265–280. For a full discussion of the South as a region, see Mark K. Bauman, "A Multithematic Approach to the Study of Southern Jewish History," in *Columbia History of American Jewry*, ed. by Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), reprinted in Bauman, *New Vision*.

19 See, e.g., Ferris and Greenberg, *Jewish Roots*; Caroline Light, *The Pride of Race and Character: The Roots of Jewish Benevolence in the Jim Crow South* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Eliza R. L. McGraw, *Two Covenants: Representations of Southern Jewishness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2005); Jennifer R. Stollman, *Daughters of Israel; Daughters of the South* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Examples of dissertations highlighting regional distinctiveness include Leah E. Hagedorn, "Jews and the American South, 1858–1905," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999); Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth Century America: The Jews of Savannah, 1830–1880," (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1997); Stuart Rockoff, "Jewish Racial Identity in Pittsburgh and Atlanta," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2000). Much of the following description can be found in Ferris and Greenberg, *Jewish Roots*.

Several of the key proponents of the distinctiveness school maintain that Jews came early to a South that was more welcoming to them than the North. They gained substantial rights not obtained elsewhere and found unprecedented acceptance, both of which were reflected in economic mobility, widespread political office holding, and extensive intermarriage. They paid the price with substantial acculturation and absorption of southern mores. Southern Jews owned enslaved workers and supported slavery, participated in duels as upper-class gentlemen, became ardent Confederates, advocated for the Lost Cause ideology, and became southern in identity and foodways.²⁰ Rooted in the South, they avoided controversial positions that might compromise their status and standing.²¹ Thus, for example, few spoke out on behalf of Black civil rights, and many questioned national Jewish organizations and Jews who came from the North to demonstrate in their advocacy. Rejection of Zionism and Reform affiliation—especially in the Classical mode—marked the Jewish South to the degree that by the last decades of the nineteenth century Jewish religious observance in the region diverged markedly from the national norm.²² Whereas western Jews demonstrated cosmopolitanism, southern Jews illustrated provincialism.

20 On support for the Confederacy, see Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001). On dueling, see Mark I. Greenberg, "Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia," *American Jewish History* 86 (March 1998): 55–75.

21 Abraham J. Peck, "'That Other Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South," *Modern Judaism* 7 (February 1987): 99–114; Abraham J. Peck, "Between Myth and Reality: Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century American South," *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, division b, 3 (Jerusalem, 1986): 119–26. Other pivotal articles include Stephen J. Whitfield, "Commercial Passions: The Southern Jew as Businessman," *American Jewish History* 71 (March 1982): 342–357; Whitfield, "Jews and Other Southerners," *Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau* (Hamden: Archon, 1984).

22 Gary P. Zola, "The Ascendency of Reform Judaism in the American South during the Nineteenth Century," in Ferris and Greenberg, *Jewish Roots*, 156–191.

Comparative Analysis and Criticism

In contrast to western states Jewish historiography, the small-town experience dominates historiography of the Jewish South. Whereas literature of the West suggests that small-town Jewish life all but died by the early twentieth century and that first San Francisco and then Los Angeles came to dominate, the southern distinctiveness school imagines substantial continuity until the last half of the twentieth century. Yet the latter school fails to take into consideration two factors, among others. First, as Leonard Rogoff and others have demonstrated, Jews living in small towns identified with and had the value systems of urbanites. Second, the numerous cities in the South boasted important Jewish presence virtually from the onset. These urban Jewish communities served as centers for peripheral small-town Jews. Movement from small town to larger city and between larger cities served as constants of southern Jewish history. The seeming persistence of small-town Jewish life masks mobility. Although some families of central European ancestry remained from generation to generation, many departed seeking greater economic opportunity and larger Jewish community involvement. Jews from Eastern Europe often took their place but followed the same pattern, only to be largely replaced in turn by fellow Eastern Europeans. Military camps bringing Jewish soldiers during and after World War II; later the opening of universities to Jewish faculty, including doctors to medical schools; and, finally, during recent decades the growth of retirement and tourist communities have repeatedly drawn Jews and their congregations to renew and create small town Jewish life.²³

Further complicating the seeming juxtaposition between the West and South, one wonders if historians of western Jewry have neglected small-town life in Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Alaska, and other locations that would reflect the same phenomenon as in the South.²⁴ As

23 Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

24 Leonard Rogoff, "Harry Golden, New Yorker," *Southern Jewish History* 11 (2008): 41–64. In *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), Rogoff argues that Philadelphia served as a critical center of the peripheral Jewish communities in North Carolina. Historians who stress southern Jewish distinctiveness point to opposition to Zionism, something also emphasized by Fred

of 1877, California led the nation with Jewish communities numbering eighty-nine. Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Washington, and Wyoming added over thirty additional such sites, and this fails to account for New Mexico. Ten percent of all Jewish communities in the country were located in the West, comprising eight percent of the country's Jews. Whereas Jews in San Francisco first constituted the majority in the region, small-town and small-city life for Jews also loomed large.²⁵

In some ways, the picture western Jewish historians draw of big-city hegemony is reminiscent of northern historiography, in which metropolitan New York Jewish history looms large. San Francisco and then Los Angeles, on the one hand, and metropolitan New York, on the other, eclipse Seattle, Portland, and Philadelphia, as well as cities with smaller Jewish populations. In like ways to the western stress on large cities, emphasis on small-town life in the South belittles the numerous important urban centers in that region.

Rosenbaum, "Zionism versus anti-Zionism: The State of Israel Comes to San Francisco," in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 119–135. Leonard Dinnerstein, "From Desert Oasis to Caucas: The Jews of Tucson," in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 139–163 is essentially the story of small city southern Jewry with minor variations based on local natural resources. See also Juanita Brooks, *The History of the Jews in Utah and Idaho, 1853–1950* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1973); Rochelle Kaplan, "Utah's Jewish History," Mormons and Jews.org, bit.ly/3THNIy; Ralph M. Tannenbaum, "The Jewish Community in Utah," *Utah History Encyclopedia*, https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/j/JEWISH_COMMUNITY.shtml; John P. Marschall, *Jews in Nevada: A History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2011); Bernard Reisman and Joel I. Reisman, *Life on the Frontier: The Jews of Alaska* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1995); Rudolph Glanz, *The Jews in American Alaska, 1867–1880* (New York: H. H. Glanz, 1953). In like manner to Dinnerstein, Earl Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner," in Rischin and Livingston, *Jews of the American West*, 194–212 posits the acceptance of Jews in the region mostly from German-speaking countries during the nineteenth century and the relative lack of antisemitism as functions of the needed skills they brought with them as merchants to western society and their contributions to their adopted homes. Although Dun and Company reports could smack of antisemitism, these to Pomeroy were not as representative of local public opinion as the uniquely high number of Jewish political officeholders. His findings mirror those of the distinctiveness school of southern Jewish historiography.

25 Rischin, "Jewish Experience," 33–34.

The southern and western distinctiveness schools each claim that the early arrival of Jews, Jewish contributions, and extensive acculturation, as well as the relative openness of society bred unprecedented acceptance as represented by wide-scale office holding and economic success. Both regions, therefore, were the least antisemitic in the country. How can these factors be unique if both schools of historiography make the same claims? If office holding and upward economic mobility serve as major evidence, would not these factors have to be compared, for example, with the Midwest?²⁶

Historians argue that people of color bore the brunt of oppression in the South, and that Asian and Latino/a immigrants and Indians bore that burden in the West, thus providing another reason for the relatively low levels of antisemitism in each region. However, I agree with Earl Pomeroy's contention that no evidence exists supporting this position, yet I go a step further.²⁷ The times of heightened racism against other groups—most notably against people of color in the South—coincided with periods of intensified antisemitism. Prejudice

26 Jonathan D. Sarna, "Comments," "Roundtable of Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 19, no. 3 (2020): 473–505 raises similar questions concerning the region as a critical variable in relation to antisemitism. Following the western school, he suggests that, when Jews could claim pioneering status, discrimination against them tended to be lessened. Yet, rather than singling out the West or South, he stresses local examples in Charleston, Cincinnati, and San Francisco. Conversely, Boston, Minneapolis, and San Diego, he argues, illustrated more antisemitism in correlation to the post-founding settlement of Jews. See also Hasia Diner's response, in which she also rejects the importance of region in favor of "borderlands, hinterlands, cities, the edges of cities, commercial agricultural zones, places of hardscrabble farming, logging, mining, and mill towns." Both stress mobility within and across regions as another mitigating force against using region as a determining factor.

27 Pomeroy, "On Becoming," 194–212 rejects the theory that hatred of the Chinese in the West and Black people in the South shielded Jews from more virulent antisemitism. For contrast with the latter, see, e.g., Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 270–284. Eisenberg, Kahn, and Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast*, 7 questions Pomeroy's assertion and suggest that the presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Native Americans who bore the brunt of greater prejudice did contribute to the acceptance of Jews as White.

against one did little if anything to lessen prejudice against another. In fact, heightened tensions against other minorities tended to exacerbate prejudice toward Jews. This held true in the South during the Jim Crow and civil rights eras and in the West, while Japanese Americans were interned during World War II. Individuals who resort to hatred of one group often attack other groups as well. The modern Klan demonized Blacks, Jews, Catholics, and labor union organizers. The Silver Shirts, Columbians, and similar organizations spewed hatred against Black and Jewish Americans. Into the twenty-first century, anti-immigrant, anti-Black, and anti-Jewish sentiments unify the same elements of hate. Furthermore, whereas Jews served throughout European history as the major victims of prejudice, throughout American history and throughout the country other groups—Indian, Asian, Irish, Italian, Polish, and Latin American immigrants, as well as Catholic, Mormon, and other religious minorities—became far more the objects of prejudice and persecution than Jews, partly because Jews remained a small percentage of the population and were typically not perceived to pose the same threats.

Still, some variations appeared. While Jews were being excluded from Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Mobile and from the Piedmont Driving Club in Atlanta during the late nineteenth century, Jewish clubs remained listed on San Francisco's social register. When racist antisemites accused Jews as a group of communism for their support of the civil rights movement in the South, the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy chastised individual Jews in Los Angeles's movie industry as communist. During the 1930s, the Silver Shirts brewed fascism from Asheville, North Carolina, and fascism flourished elsewhere in the South and North, whereas Nazis in the West concentrated especially on Jews in the movie industry because of their influence on public opinion.²⁸

28 Raymond Mohl, *South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945–1960* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Clive Webb, *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Movement* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Steven J. Ross, *Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots against Hollywood and America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

Another contentious issue relates to how Jews responded to the persecution of other groups. Jews in the South have been castigated by some historians for largely acquiescing to, if not supporting racism within their midst. Fearful of their position and physical safety, many implored national Jewish organizations to desist from issuing statements advocating Black civil rights and opposed northern Jews who travelled to the region to march and demonstrate without concern for the precarious position of Jews in the local communities.²⁹ Other historians argue that numerous Jews in the region openly supported desegregation and Black civil rights, albeit usually not by marching and demonstrating.³⁰

Yet, even if one were to accept the distinctiveness interpretation, the real litmus test would not be contrasts between southern Jews and northern Jews dealing with racism in the South; rather, it would be how Jews in other sections reacted to discrimination against other minority groups in their region. Eisenberg's study of Jewish reactions in San Francisco and Los Angeles to anti-Japanese feelings and actions illustrates worse responses than those associated with Jews in the South toward desegregation.³¹ As desegregation moved to the North, Jews in that region arguably behaved worse than Jews in the South. Busing to achieve integration in Chicago and Boston and the move toward neighborhood schools in New York provoked wide-scale Jewish opposition and open protest. Violent encounters took place between Orthodox and Hasidim and people of color in areas of New York, including Crown Heights. Nothing like this took place in the South. Urban riots/insurrections in northern and western cities often targeted Jewish stores and

29 See, e.g., Goldstein, *Price*; Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

30 See, e.g., Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997); P. Allen Krause, *To Stand Aside or Stand Alone: Southern Reform Rabbis and the Civil Rights Movement* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), and the numerous works cited in these books as well as articles in *Southern Jewish History*.

31 Eisenberg, *First*. For Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger's anti-Chinese position, see Fred Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1848–1999* (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2000), 89.

resulted in very negative reactions. Whereas Jewish stores in the South were targeted for civil rights demonstrations and sit-ins because civil rights leaders viewed them as more sympathetic than non-Jewish business owners, they were not destroyed. Jewish department store owners typically reacted with surprise and resentment for being singled out but desegregated relatively quickly.

Differences can also be read more as divergences. The discovery of minerals in many areas of the West seemingly contrasts with the dominance of cash crop agriculture in the South. Nonetheless, Jews prospered by concentrating as middlemen and merchants in both situations. Some Jews attempted to cement their place in southern White society through advocacy of Lost Cause ideology. But Jews in the West joined and led Native Sons organizations, “notoriously nativist organizations dedicated to honoring white history in the west.”³²

Experiences with the modern Ku Klux Klan in both sections reflected a mixture of antisemitism and acceptance. In both sections, Klansmen, in Jonathan D. Sarna’s famous depiction, found difficulty coming to grips with the conflicting image of the international Jew versus the Jew next door.

In *The Provincials*, Evans argues that living in a region dominated by a regional White culture—fundamentalist/evangelical in religion, anti-intellectual, and antiscientific—must have influenced Jews. In fact, in the Bible Belt, Jews affiliated at a higher rate than elsewhere to demonstrate that they, too, were churchgoers.³³ In the religiously more relaxed West (as in New Orleans), synagogue affiliation suffered. Historians also argue that Reform dominated the South by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, since Jews tended to assimilate southern White mores.

But these factors placed together reflect an enigma. Would not Jews have espoused an emotional, spiritual form of Judaism instead of Classical Reform if they were following the conservative Protestant lead? Jews of central European origin in the region took their religion rationally. They tended to reject anti-intellectual currents and support,

32 Eisenberg, Kahn, and Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast*, 101.

33 Hoberman, *How Strange* finds this tendency in New England small towns as well.

for example, the theory and teaching of evolution, a far cry from the typical depiction of the fundamentalist South. Protestantism in the region did influence Jews, but through the urban, middle, and upper class high-church model commonly impacting Jews and Judaism virtually throughout the country, and not of that of the majority of southern White Protestants.

Reading the work of historians of western Jewry, one is struck by similarities concerning Jews as local pioneers, Jewish social services and institutional development, religious trends, chain migration, Jewish economic networks, and so many other areas not only with the Jewish South but also with almost every other similar place in the United States. Conflicts over the powers of rabbis; differences based on country of origin, ritual observance, and Zionism; the emergence and significance of Reform and Reform leadership; Reform rabbis serving as “ambassadors to the gentiles” and advocates of social reform; and the difficulties of practicing Judaism in relative isolation were more ubiquitous than unique.

Classical Reform and anti-Zionism thrived in both regions as they did in other places throughout America.³⁴ East European enclaves with Yiddish culture, traditional institutions, and Zionism flourished in cities across regions. Atlanta’s south side, the Pinch section of Memphis, the Dryades area of New Orleans, and similar Eastern European Jewish enclaves in Baltimore differed from their counterparts in the West and elsewhere only marginally in time and size. Baron de Hirsch and Anshei S’fard congregations appeared in numerous areas.³⁵ Sephardic

34 Rosenbaum, *Visions* (especially for Rabbi Voorsanger). On Rabbi Emil Hirsch, see also Tobias Brinkman, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

35 Born in the German states, Baron de Hirsch (1831–1896) was a financier and internationally renowned philanthropist. He founded the Baron de Hirsch Fund to assist immigrants in Canada and the United States and the Jewish Colonization Society. Congregations named in his honor were established in Memphis, Tennessee; Seattle, Washington; and Dawson City, Alaska, besides Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Cornwall, Ontario. Jews from Eastern Europe and especially Romania established Anshei S’fard (spellings varied) congregations to follow the teaching of Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (Ha’Ari, or the Lion), a sixteenth-century Jewish mystic and a father of modern kabbalah,

communities in Atlanta and Montgomery, Seattle, Portland, and Los Angeles diverged more because of size than any regionally based characteristics. Jeffrey S. Gurock, a foremost historian of Orthodoxy especially in the North, relished writing the history of an Orthodox congregation in Charleston because it highlighted major national themes and patterns.³⁶

Support for the Confederacy offers a logical example of southern Jewish distinctiveness. Yet some historians question even this. Their work records how many Jews in the South delayed or avoided military service.³⁷ Adam Mendelsohn has found that Jews in the North were equally reticent to serve. Those who could afford to, as in the South, tended to eschew military service. Moreover, abolition and especially the Emancipation Proclamation dramatically curtailed Jewish enlistment in the North regardless of economic class. Robert Rosen identifies the typical Jewish Confederate as a recent immigrant from the German states who worked as a peddler or clerk in New Orleans.³⁸ Mendelsohn suggests that lower-class Jews in the North tended to enlist for economic reasons. If that were also the case in the South, then wide-scale allegiance to the Confederacy would be brought further into question.³⁹

Contrary to distinctiveness school claims, Jews in the South did speak out on controversial issues from Reconstruction to prohibition, women's rights, and the long civil rights movement. They opposed prayer in

in Safed. Congregations existed with this name in Atlanta, Georgia; Louisville, Kentucky; New Orleans, Louisiana; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Glendale, Wisconsin; Boro Park, Monsey, and Wesley Hills, New York; Lynn, Massachusetts; Lakewood, New Jersey; and Waterbury, Connecticut among other places, although many ultimately merged with other Orthodox synagogues or disappeared.

36 Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Shalom Beth Israel and American Jewish History* (Charleston: College of Charleston Library and Brith Shalom Beth Israel, 2004).

37 Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); Daniel R. Weinfeld, "A Certain Ambivalence: Florida's Jews and the Civil War," *Southern Jewish History* 17 (2014): 91–129.

38 Rosen, *Jewish Confederates*.

39 Adam Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2022).

the public schools, the use of the *Merchant of Venice* as required school reading, and the building of a statue of Jesus in Corpus Christi harbor. Thus, in these and other cases, southern Jews did support unpopular causes and opposed antisemitism.⁴⁰

What of local versus regional distinctiveness? Various examples suggest that local phenomenon can be equally if not more significant than regional factors: the movie industry in Los Angeles, gambling and nightclubs in Reno and Las Vegas, and life in Phoenix versus Portland, Seattle, or San Francisco. Residing in commercial cities like Atlanta or Charlotte, technology hubs including Austin, North Carolina's Research Triangle, or California's Silicon Valley, historic cities like Savannah and Charleston, and small towns where Jewish populations and congregations are either dying or coming into their own as retirement communities, university centers, or resorts all reflect varieties of historical experiences. Historians discuss the concept of "the culture of place." Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and other locations display distinctive cultural traits that affect the individuals from different groups that settle there far more than regional differences.⁴¹

40 Leonard Rogoff, "A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898," *Southern Jewish History* 14 (2011): 37–75; Daniel R. Weinfeld, "Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida," *Southern Jewish History* (2005): 31–76; Stuart Rockoff, "Carpetbaggers, Jacklegs, and Bolting Republicans: Jews in Reconstruction Politics in Ascension Parish, Louisiana," *American Jewish History* 97 (2013): 39–64; Jacob Morrow-Spitzer, "Free from Proscription and Prejudice: Politics and Race in the Election of One Jewish Mayor in Late Reconstruction Louisiana," *Southern Jewish History* 22 (2019): 5–41; Marni Davis, *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Leonard Rogoff, "Southern Jews, Woman Suffrage," *Southern Jewish History* 23 (2020): 1–42. Besides references concerning Jews and civil rights above, see Bobbie S. Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner, 1860–1929* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013); Charles L. Chavis, Jr., "Rabbi Edward L. Israel: The Making of a Progressive Interracialist, 1923–1941," *Southern Jewish History* 22 (2019): 43–87; James L. Moses, *Righteous and Just Cause: Rabbi Ira Sanders and the Fight for Racial and Social Justice in Arkansas, 1923–1963* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018); Mary Jo O'Rear, "The Constitution, Corpus Christi, and the Statue on the Bay," *Southern Jewish History* 27 (2024).

41 Jonathan D. Sarna kindly brought this concept of "the culture of place" to my

The same holds true of the somewhat ephemeral concept of identity. People identify with their region but also with their state and city. Jews who live in Texas identify as Texans, southerners, and westerners and as people from Dallas, Fort Worth, or Galveston. Identification with Atlanta, Charlotte, Charleston, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Denver or any other location can easily surpass identifying with the entire state or region. Identities change over time and in relation to circumstances. Their impact also varies from individual to individual.

Foodways reflect the same characteristics, with adaptation to local culinary styles being equally if not more important than region.⁴² Low country Charleston fare differs dramatically from New Orleans Creole and Tex-Mex cooking. Jews living in Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, and Napa, California avail themselves of different ingredients and recipes. I was born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island, so I like ice coffee. Yet I have lived most of my life in the Atlanta area, so I also order sweet tea. This may reflect a braided identity, borrowing from Stephen J. Whitfield's insightful phrase, but my identity as a Jew—in the variety of its many and changing meanings—overcomes local and regional allegiances.⁴³

The few comparative studies spanning the South and West emphasize similarities. Deborah Dash Moore draws parallels after World War II in *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.*, and Toll identifies few regional differences in Jewish women's club activities during the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades

attention in an e-mail dated 1 June 2021. He also noted that, as argued by David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), individuals from different places and cultures settled in specific areas, and their differences shaped local cultures. For example, early Jews in Cincinnati hailed largely from Bavaria; those from Columbus, from Poland. In turn, their neighbors influence Jews. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jewish Boston, Athens, and Jerusalem (A Tribute to Samuel Heilman Upon His Retirement)," *Society* 57 (2020): 485–486.

42 Whereas Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) attempts to make the case for regionalism, much of her evidence documents local variations.

43 Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Braided Identity of Southern Jewry," *American Jewish History* 78 (March 1988): 363–387.

of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Lee Shai Weissbach's study of Jewish life in small towns finds only minor, if any, variations across the country during the twentieth century, as does Shari Rabin's history of Jews and Judaism along the frontier and Zev Eleff's study of synagogue control, both during the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ These studies make it clear that historians should not compare apples and oranges but look to similar local environments for their analysis to make sense.

The New, New England Jewish History

Two recent books cover the six-state area of New England: Michael Hoberman's *New Israel/New England: Jews and Puritans in Early America* and his *How Strange it Seems: Cultural Life of Jews in Small-Town New England*.⁴⁶ *New Israel/New England* is almost dismissive of New England Jewish history before the mid-nineteenth century. Hoberman contends that Newport claimed most Jews in the region before that era, with approximately two hundred residents. New England, he observes, "had far fewer Jews than any of the other areas of the thirteen colonies." His book concentrates instead on the influence of Jews and Judaism on the Puritans. Nonetheless, he chronicles the history of colonial New England Jewry and finds that they largely fit within the model of highly transient Jews in port cities across the Atlantic world. When Nephuse Israel members requested and received donations from congregations across

44 Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); William Toll, "A Quiet Revolution: Jewish Women's Clubs and the Widening Female Sphere, 1870–1920," *American Jewish Archives* 41 (Spring–Summer 1989): 7–26.

45 Weissbach, *Jewish Life*; Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017); Zev Eleff, *Who Rules the Synagogue?: Religious Authority and the Formation of American Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Lee Shai Weissbach, "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South," *American Jewish History* 85 (September 1997): 231–262; Weissbach, "Stability and Mobility in the Small Jewish Community: Examples from Kentucky History," *American Jewish History* 79 (Spring 1990): 355–375; Weissbach, "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective: The Era of Mass Migration," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 69 (1995): 255–274.

46 Michael Hoberman, *New Israel/New England: Jews and Puritans in Early America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011); Hoberman, *How Strange*.

the Atlantic to build its sanctuary, it responded to New York's Shearith Israel "in an atmosphere of extraregional commerce and cooperation." Finding mixed acceptance in Roger Williams's Rhode Island, Jews largely lacked acceptance in the other colonies. New England Jewry basically died out after the American Revolution until Jews from central Europe re-created it during the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷

What can one make of New England Jewish history before this influx? Newport, Rhode Island gains importance as home to one of the five mainland British colonial synagogues. The few Jews present in the region acted financially and in terms of mobility like Jews across the colonies and Atlantic. Conversely, the lack of acceptance, the virtual demise of the Jewish population, and the paucity of numbers reflects somewhat the history of Jews in North Carolina and Maryland but otherwise stands out as distinctive.

Only with the later renewal of Jewish life does New England again reflect national trends. Boston then stands out as a city with major Jewish presence and Connecticut as partly a suburb of New York but nonetheless with important urban centers. This fits metropolitan and suburban trends. But if historians look at Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, and Massachusetts as a region, with few exceptions they would find Jews in small towns and small cities much like the image of southern Jewish communities. Hoberman's *How Strange It Seems* stresses this small-town experience. As was the case almost universally, he pictures his protagonists as cosmopolitans. Cities served as centers for peripheral Jewish communities. Finding fundamental similarities for Jews in small towns throughout the country, he nevertheless argues, "that the particularities of local experiences do matter." The mixture of "past and future prospects, of tradition and innovation...has influenced Jews and non-Jews alike in their fashioning of a place-based mentality." Using interviews and stressing folk history, Hoberman observes: "Like all newcomers, the Jews of rural New

47 Hoberman, *New Israel/New England*, 3–4, 134, respectively. Parallels exist for the interest that New England Puritans demonstrated in Jews and Judaism with that shown by Lutheran Reverend Johann Martin Boltzius, revivalist George Whitfield, and Methodist John Wesley in colonial Georgia.

England have adopted local cultural templates.” Yet Jews arriving during the late nineteenth and especially the early twentieth century differed from their non-Jewish neighbors in that they did not look back with nostalgia but rather forward to economic opportunity and civic engagement. As was the case for small-town Jewry throughout the country, most started as peddlers until they amassed sufficient capital to become merchants. Many, too, started as scrap metal dealers. Some built factories, just like Jews in the South Carolina up country and in North Carolina. They used family networks for support and to expand their businesses. Stories of contingent acceptance with memories of incidental antisemitism are recorded in similar environments throughout the country. The arrival of Eastern European Jews overwhelmed the earlier central European presence only to be augmented and supplanted by new arrivals during the 1960s and thereafter, another typical phenomenon of small-town Jewish life. Like Jews elsewhere, they valued education, joined civic clubs, contributed to the well-being of their communities, and ultimately held political offices.⁴⁸

Reading Hoberman, I am struck by the similarities of small-town life across regions. Almost every story he uncovers could be told about the South. However, some differences stand out. He hardly mentions Jews of central European origin or African Americans and their struggle for civil rights. Because he chooses to concentrate on small towns, Jews in New England cities are virtually invisible.

48 Hoberman, *How Strange*, 11, 17 (first and second quotations, respectively), 19–20, 28–35, 103–133. Two differences between small-town Jewish communities in the South and New England appear to be that Jews in the latter have tended to comprise a higher percentage of these rural populations (14–15). In both regions, agricultural programs drew Russian Jews, but more seem to have remained in farming, including cattle ranching, in New England than in the South. This may relate to a subject discussed in this article: the place of origin and occupation in the old world of the immigrants (25–28 and chapter 2). Yet Jewish cattle and horse dealers in rural New England served as middlemen much as did Jewish cotton brokers in the South. Both followed economic roles imported from Europe. Hoberman’s discussion of chain migration patterns (26–27) was largely universal. The back-to-the-land counterculture movement and rise of *havurah* groups during the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond (36–38) clearly parallels happenings in sections of the far West and elsewhere.

It is possible that few central European Jews chose to move to these towns. Yet their absence may equally be a function of choices made by the historian. Hoberman essentially starts with the twentieth century with the result that the reader is not informed if Jews from central Europe first inhabited these towns and then most moved away, as happened in so many southern towns. His research also centers on interviews with descendants of East European Jews. Presumably few African Americans lived in these towns, and issues like busing did not impact this community as much as it did Boston for example. Jews did experience antisemitism. Was this lessened by the presence of a group or groups who, like African Americans in the South, Hispanic Americans in the southwest, and Asians in the Pacific, bore the greater brunt of prejudice? Although Hoberman points to a variety of other immigrant minorities, he does not address this issue.

Small-town versus urban concentration highlights a fundamental issue of historiography. By choosing options historians create constructs that can obscure broader patterns. As has been demonstrated, historians of western Jewish distinctiveness emphasize the big city experience and marginalize small town life. Historians of the southern Jewish distinctiveness school concentrate on the small towns and downplay the cities, as Hoberman does for twentieth-century New England.

Time and circumstance play their parts in this. The last fifty years witnessed the revitalization and flourishing of small-town Jewish life in New England. However, when Stanley Broches published *Jews in New England: Six Monographs* in 1942, the small towns possibly looked like dead ends. He ignored them to emphasize metropolitan Jewish life.⁴⁹ A more holistic view of regional and national American Jewish history would integrate rural and urban experiences. Although population figures make a difference, they should not be used to ignore the variety of locations where Jews settled.

49 Stanley Broches, *Jews in New England: Six Monographs* (New York: Bloch, 1942).

Final Observations

Emphasizing region clearly tends to mask similarities with similar local environments. The histories of Jewish social services; even the names of Jewish clubs; general economic mobility and the preponderance of businesses and the professions; chain migration; the roles of community builders, ethnic brokers, and ambassadors to the gentiles; changes in power structures from rabbis and laypeople to federation executives; and shifts from volunteerism to professionalism are only some of the subjects that, with truly comparative study, demonstrate national patterns. The description of the free and open society of the West and weakness of western religious practices, to give another example, parallels depictions of New Orleans Jewish history.

Far from being isolated, numerous factors connected regions. These include family and business ties; affiliation with national and international Jewish organizations; conventions associated with national Jewish organizations; Jewish causes including opposition to antisemitism, support for immigration, and Israel; and the movement of people. As Eisenberg, Kahn, and Toll recognize, the pioneer rabbi of the West, Julius Eckman, received preparation for his role from his experiences in southern congregations. Abraham Labatt from Charleston won election as one of San Francisco's first alderman. In San Francisco and Los Angeles, Labatt family members "helped create Jewish community life." Wandering Jews, the Labatts moved from Charleston to New Orleans to the West, creating Jewish community institutions along the way. The same held true for members of the Dyer family of Baltimore, who moved freely to Galveston and back and forth to California. Born in Charleston, Solomon Heydenfeldt became a California Supreme Court justice, having practiced law in Alabama and Georgia and secured a judgeship in the South. Adolph Sutro, a mining engineer in the West and Jewish mayor of San Francisco, had a cousin, Max Sutro, who served as the first reader of Har Sinai in Baltimore. As transplants from elsewhere in the United States, Jewish community founders in the West represented diverse cultures and business experiences, as well as varying

degrees of English proficiency.⁵⁰ Yet those same individuals often maintained business, family, and religious ties to their prior homes. The same flow of people across regions occurred from the South to the North. Bernard Baruch, Louis Brandeis, Lillian Hellman, Ludwig Lewisohn, Adolph Ochs, and Nathan Straus, among many others, had southern roots and northern careers.

During a generation in which historians question southern, American, and American Jewish historical exceptionalism with research emphasizing global and transnational perspectives, regional distinctiveness can strike one as parochial.⁵¹ Nonetheless, as long as the New York metropolitan area dominates as the normative paradigm of American Jewish history, regional studies remain essential. Only from them can we learn, for example, that work in the garment industry, unionization and strikes, and socialism were templates for Eastern European Jewish immigrants in New York and a few other industrial cities, but in the vast majority of places in the country these people opened small businesses, did not unionize or strike, and adhered to socialism more as an intellectual pursuit and ideal than as a necessary corrective to their economic positions.⁵² One can only hope for the greater inclusion of the history

50 Eisenberg, Kahn, and Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast*, 17, 21 (quotation), 41, 44, 18; Robert E. Stewart and Mary Frances Stewart, *Adolph Sutro: A Biography* (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1962); William R. Huber, *Adolph Sutro: King of the Comstock Load and Mayor of San Francisco* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2020); William M. Kramer, "Solomon Heydenfeldt (1816–1890): Supreme Court Judge," *Western States Jewish History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 129–144; Kramer, "Solomon Heydenfeldt: Earliest Important Jewish Attorney in California" *Western States Jewish History* 23, no. 2 (January 1991): 149–161; Bauman, *New Vision*, 181–185, 193, 227–229. After his judgeship, Heydenfeldt became a renowned member of the San Francisco and California bar but was forced to leave legal practice because of his refusal to take the test oath during the Civil War since he remained a stalwart advocate for the South.

51 David Sorkin, "Is American Jewry Exceptional?: Comparing Jewish Emancipation in Europe and America," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (September 2010): 175–200; Tony Michel, "Is America 'Different'? A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (September 2010): 201–224; Natalie L. Ring, "Is Southern History on Life Support?: A Review Essay," *Journal of Southern History* 90/1 (February 2024): 119–136.

52 Stephen J. Whitfield, review of *New Vision of Southern Jewish History* by Mark

of Jews and Judaism throughout the country as integral components of a broader and more complex story.

Stressing the uniqueness of a location's history runs the danger of marginalizing it. Peculiarities too easily transform into cute stories that are relatively unimportant for understanding the whole picture. Certainly, local and regional variations should not be minimized, but neither should they be overemphasized to the neglect of similarities. Only by tracing both in realistic terms can we achieve a truer and fuller understanding of the scope of American Jewish history.

Mark K. Bauman, editor of Southern Jewish History, is the author or editor of numerous books the most recent of which are a history of The Temple in Atlanta emphasizing social justice (2023) and his collected essays, A New Vision of Southern Jewish History (2019), which won the 2023 Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) award as the best book in the field published during the previous four years. He has held fellowships at the American Jewish Archives and taught as a Mason Fellow at the College of William & Mary. With Adam Mendelsohn, he co-edits the Jews and Judaism; History and Culture series published by the University of Alabama Press.

Bauman, *American Jewish Archives Journal* 61, no. 2 (2019): 121 criticizes the volume by comparing the small-town Jewish South with “the sweatshops and trade-union struggles depicted in, say, Irving Howe’s *World of Our Fathers* (1976).” Whitfield fails to realize that Howe’s depiction held true for Jews in a very few cities and certainly not for the vast majority of small-town Jewish communities nationally. Again, Whitfield falls into the danger of equating New York City Jewish history with American Jewish history writ large.

Book Reviews

Ayelet Brinn, *A Revolution in Type: Gender and the Making of the American Yiddish Press* (New York: New York University Press, 2023), 328pp.

Ayelet Brinn's well-researched book traces the history of the nationally circulated American Yiddish press from its beginnings in 1880s through its waning years in the 1930s and 1940s. Brinn argues that, regardless of ideology, Yiddish newspapers grappled with issues of circulation, readership, writers, and editorial control, all of which had gendered components at their base. Women readers were key to the newspapers' mass readership and, hence, to commercial success. Whatever their political or religious bent, the Yiddish press had to confront questions of gender in their content, marketing, and in editorial structures—notably the status of women writers and of men who wrote under female pseudonyms. Indeed, Brinn says, “questions about women and gender were central to the emergence of the Yiddish press as a powerful, influential force in American Jewish culture” (7).

Focusing primarily on three New York Yiddish daily newspapers, the religiously Orthodox *Dos yiddishes tageblat* (*Tag*), the socialist *Forverts* (*Forward*), and, later, the communist *Frayht* (*Freiheit*). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Tag* and *Forverts* dominated the immigrant reading market. Like the American popular press in this period, Yiddish newspapers competed for readers, albeit with vastly different messages. Both featured women writers, developed women's pages, and made concerted efforts to attract women readers via content and advertising. While the two papers had different views of assimilation and Americanization, they appealed to women readers who were key to their commercial success.

General human interest, advice columns, and women's pages were central features of all Yiddish newspapers. Abraham Cahan, for example, longtime editor of the *Forverts* and an important figure in American Yiddish literature and politics, offered “Advice to the Lovelorn” and the

famous “Bintl Briefs.” The *Forverts* carried specifically political messages for women, while *Tag* “infused its women’s page with quotations from the Bible...as well as jokes...that could be read aloud at holiday celebrations” (153). Interestingly, both papers supported woman suffrage but framed the issue in different terms. Entertainment, news, and practical advice appeared inflected by each paper’s political outlook and reflected different “understandings of the ideal future trajectory of American Jewish life and the roles women should play in shaping this trajectory.” Human interest, Brinn argues, “ran concurrently with other advice and write-in columns” that, while “drastically different in content and tone,” nonetheless were key to each newspaper’s efforts to attract large audiences (77).

In the book’s most original chapter, Brinn grapples with the difficulties of interpretation as many Yiddish journalists—male and female—wrote under assumed names. On the one hand, this provided important career paths for women. The well-known activist Rose Pastor Stokes, for example, wrote a column called “Just Between Ourselves, Girls,” in *Tag*’s English edition in her own name, but she also wrote under the name “Zelda” for the *Forverts*. Women’s columns also revealed male assumptions about women’s roles and interests, particularly when men wrote under female names. Getsel Zelikovits, for example, was the long-term writer for *Tag*’s “Lithuanian Wisewoman” (120). Male journalists, Brinn argues, by and large brought “elements gleaned from broader American cultural spheres into Yiddish newspapers.” Women journalists, on the other hand, “often strove to break down the boundaries that newspaper editors imposed on women’s writing—often with very little success (221). This contrast, Brinn says, reveals “ambivalent feelings about modernity and change in the American Jewish world” (221). “When read this way,” she argues, “women’s content becomes not peripheral to the Yiddish press but key to understanding” how it functioned and offers “critical insights into the power, priorities, and complications” in the Yiddish publishing sphere (139).

Circulation of Yiddish dailies declined during the interwar years even as Yiddish publishers “became spaces in which the boundaries of American Jewish culture were actively contested and stretched” (223). For those familiar with the history of the American Yiddish press, Brinn’s

well-researched book will pose important new questions about gender and interpretation. For those less familiar with the topic, her book will not only present a sweeping historical overview of the Yiddish press but also provide an important gendered lens through which to understand not only the Yiddish press but also the larger history of journalism in America.

Susan Levine is Professor Emerita of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research and teaching have focused on gender, social welfare, and food policy. Most recently she has been exploring the history of international food relief, in particular the relation between voluntary aid organizations and state agricultural policies and geopolitical strategic goals. She is the author of Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age; Degrees of Equality: The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth Century Feminism; and School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program.

***Jewish Historical Societies: Navigating the Professional-Amateur Divide*, edited by Joel Gereboff and Jonathan L. Friedmann (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2023), 288 pp.**

Since the establishment of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association in 1951, there are now more than forty historical societies dedicated to the study and preservation of American Jewish history in specific cities, states, and regions across the country. Existing alongside the American Jewish Archives and the American Jewish Historical Society, these societies have contributed significantly to our understanding of the American Jewish experience in a variety of ways. They produce and support archives, journals, newsletters, conferences, lectures, museum exhibits, documentary films, travel programs, and, more recently, podcasts and digital mapping projects. The field of American Jewish history is far broader and more diverse as a result.

While many of these organizations have existed for decades, there have been few efforts to date to document the growth and analyze the

contributions of American Jewish historical societies, to evaluate them in comparative perspective, and to explore the challenges they face in navigating between the standards of professional historical scholarship and the needs and desires of the lay audiences they serve and depend on for funding. Joel Gereboff (Arizona State) and Jonathan Friedmann (Academy for Jewish Religion, California) have edited a volume on American Jewish historical societies that expertly fills this void by exploring the critical issues that these institutions face while charting possible futures and new agendas for them to pursue moving forward.

At a time when we still do not have a national association of American Jewish historical societies or regular conferences devoted to discussing their work, this book creates an important opportunity for the similarities and differences between many of these organizations to emerge. An introductory chapter by Gereboff examines the “goals and roles” of American Jewish historical societies and establishes the structural and ideological issues at stake. Each chapter that follows is devoted to a specific organization and written either by its director or a significant contributor, such that we gain deep insight into what makes each historical society unique along with the many common features they share. Some of them have paid staff; others are run by dedicated volunteers. Some emphasize research and scholarship, while others focus primarily on public programming and outreach. Some are affiliated with universities, museums, or heritage centers, while others are completely freestanding. While some historical societies own or rent physical space, others have no brick-and-mortar address. Each of these variables influences how historical societies approach their work, particularly with respect to identifying core constituencies and articulating financial priorities.

At the heart of the work of American Jewish historical societies is a fundamental tension “between objective, dispassionate scholarship, which seeks to better understand the history of Jews in the United States” as a subject of academic inquiry, and “the use of history to ground or bolster Jewish identity” through exhibits and articles that celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of Jews to their communities (12). Do historical societies exist to advance the field of American Jewish history, or to strengthen Jewish pride and promote greater acceptance of Jews in society? Are these two goals necessarily in conflict with one another?

As Gereboff's review of the scholarship on American Jewish historical societies demonstrates, identitarian goals have been part and parcel of the work of these organizations since the founding of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) in the 1890s. The impulse to use history to promote positive attitudes toward Jews and Jewish identity arguably reached its peak in 1954, during the tercentenary celebration marking three hundred years of Jewish communal life in the United States. Against the backdrop of the Cold War and the era of McCarthyism, at a fraught political moment when Jews' loyalties and ideological commitments were under question, the Tercentenary Committee created lectures, exhibits, slideshows, and other educational materials that highlighted the contributions of outstanding Jewish Americans and affirmed the harmonious compatibility of Jewish and American values.

Critics of this approach assert that, in its emphasis on touting accomplishments and nurturing ethnic pride, the work of American Jewish historical societies can lean too far into filiopietistic and parochial narratives that elide sensitive and uncomfortable topics, such as Jewish involvement in organized crime and the complicated nature of Black-Jewish relations. Insisting upon a self-congratulatory framing of American Jewish history diminishes the ability of historical societies to operate according to academic standards, discourages other historians from treating the subject as a serious endeavor, and dissuades scholars who do not identify as Jewish from pursuing research in the field.

Across the country, as the contributors to this volume demonstrate, historical societies are responding to these concerns in thoughtful and constructive ways. Jeanne Abrams, my predecessor at the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society and the University of Denver, wrote and directed a series of documentary films on themes in local history that celebrate the accomplishments of Jewish Coloradans while drawing upon archival sources, oral histories, and scholarly research. According to Abrams, the films handle difficult subjects such as relationships between Jews and Native Americans "sensitively but honestly," enabling audiences to begin to grapple with historical complexity (217). Similarly, as Catherine Cangany, executive director of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, notes, engaging with local history on a sophisticated level "necessarily means facing hard historical truths" about racism and

intergroup relations in their programs and exhibits and challenging the “persistent local belief that Michigan’s Jews have always been allied with the Black community” (197). Finally, Mark Bauman, in describing the work of the Southern Jewish Historical Society with which he has been involved for several decades, notes with pride that the organization has had non-Jewish “members, presenters, board members, and presidents,” since its goal is to produce knowledge about the Southern Jewish experience in the United States, not to strengthen Jewish identity in the region (185).

American Jewish historical societies face additional critical challenges in the twenty-first century that are raised but not fully explored in these pages. They must be able to reach younger audiences, including those who receive most of their information from websites and social media outlets. To connect with transplanted American Jews of every age and stage, they must find ways to articulate the relevance of local and regional history to constituents who are not native to those places. The Jewish Museum of the American West, which is an online resource and not a building, represents one effort to address these issues, as does the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities created by the Institute for Southern Jewish Life. More needs to be said about the use of podcasts, digital mapping projects, and social media channels as tools to present historical research in contemporary formats and to engage a more diverse community.

With this book, Gereboff and Friedmann have sparked a timely and important dialogue about the past, present, and future of Jewish historical societies in the United States. Hopefully their efforts will serve as a catalyst to inspire more conversations and collaboration among those of us who are engaged in this work and invested in addressing the issues at stake.

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Adam D. Mendelsohn, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 336pp., 60 color illust.

For the past 124 years or so the study of Jews during the Civil War has been largely dominated by attempts to prove that Jews were patriotic and discussions of antisemitism (usually focused on Ulysses S. Grant's familiar and infamous order). Attempts to celebrate the devotion and courage of Jews and counter antisemitism have meant that the field has in many ways stagnated. From Simon Wolf's 1895 *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* to Bertram Korn's 1949 *American Jewry and the Civil War*, the focus was on collecting accounts of Jewish military contributions and celebrating them. Compiling statistics to show that Jews were patriotic dominated since Wolf's work. Even recent works like Robert N. Rosen's *Jewish Confederates* (2000) have often ended up being celebrations of Jewish "heroes." Jonathan D. Sarna rightly called Rosen's book "something of an apologia, a pious bow to the 'religion of the lost cause.'" The subfield of Jewish Civil War history is in desperate need of new approaches and new questions, as well as nuanced treatments of human beings living in the past.

In the past twenty years a new crop of scholars, including Sarna, Shari Rabin, and Adam Mendelsohn, has begun providing this needed nuanced scholarship. The fields of Jewish American history and Civil War history will benefit from this study. In seeking to expand the questions scholars of Jews in the Civil War seek to answer, Mendelsohn's new book, *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War: The Union Army*, is a welcome corrective to a subfield that has stagnated. It is a groundbreaking work that moves beyond questions of "how many" served and into "more-nuanced questions" (xi). The book utilizes the Shapell Manuscript Foundation's database of Jewish Civil War soldiers and sources. The Shapell list of Jewish soldiers allows statistical analysis of Jewish service, yet this book shows brilliantly that "aggregates conceal considerable variation" (43) and instead turns to questions of "Who were these men?" The six body chapters cover a range of topics including the enlistment process and why men enlisted, who the enlisted men were, how Jews interacted with gentiles, how they practiced their faith within the military, the

communities they created, and the postwar lives of veterans. In asking new questions, this book promises to revolutionize the study of Jews in the Civil War. In addition to being a groundbreaking piece of scholarship, the book is also beautifully written and researched. Accompanied by sixty color illustrations, it tells previously overlooked stories in compelling prose and is enjoyable to read for both scholars and lay readers.

At the end of the day, this book contains arguments with which future scholars might disagree, but they answer previously ignored questions. Mendelsohn has opened up the field of Jewish Civil War history. Perhaps the most important takeaway is his conclusion that Jews during the Civil War “were not the modern Maccabees of the mythmakers, but instead moral men in momentous times, grappling with the complexities of being Jews in the Union army” (224). Like so many elements of the Civil War, the memory makers have simplified reality. Jews in the conflict were complex. Some were brave, and some were not. Some joined the army for money, and others joined for national pride. Others did not join at all. Some hid their Judaism, while others were public about it. The study of Jews in the Civil War requires critical analysis. This book will be a foundational work for future scholars. No work on Jews in the Civil War will be able to ignore this book.

Scholars love to nitpick in book reviews, often complaining about the author not writing the book they wanted to read. I will not do that here. The book is an excellent study of Jews in the US Army. It accomplishes exactly what Mendelsohn set out to do: write the definitive study of Jews in the US Army during the Civil War. But the success in Mendelsohn’s book also makes me realize how much is left to study about Civil War Jewish history and how much has been overlooked. This is not a so much a criticism as a compliment. We need studies of Jews who avoided military service, of Jews on the home front, of the families of Jewish soldiers (like Holly Pinheiro’s *The Families’ Civil War* does for African American soldiers), and of Jews in the South. The fact that *Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War* have covered so much new terrain yet so much remains to be written is a testament to the future potential of the field. The scholars who write those future studies will have to start with Mendelsohn’s work. Hopefully the book will inspire the next generation of scholars.

The book also demonstrates how to approach Civil War soldiers more generally. One decision Mendelsohn made was to focus on soldiers in the US Army. Part of a planned two-volume series with one book on each side of the conflict, Mendelsohn chose to not conflate Confederates and US Army soldiers, something studies of Civil War soldiers so often do, frequently to their detriment. This was a smart choice that allows for more nuanced analysis. But it also means I cannot yet read Mendelsohn's next volume on Confederate soldiers. I eagerly await it.

Adam H. Domb is Associate Professor of History at Auburn University and author of *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory*. His work has appeared in a variety of journals including *Journal of Southern History* and *Civil War History*.

Françoise S. Ouzan, *True to My God and Country: How Jewish Americans Fought in World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2024), xix + 256 pp.

True to My God and Country is part of the series *Studies in Antisemitism* edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University. World War II was the most formative event of the twentieth century for America's Jews, not least because it resulted in a marked decline in American antisemitism.¹ This was due to the public's revulsion of the racist ideology of America's enemies, the efforts of the federal government to limit racial and religious prejudice that threatened the unity vital to military victory, and a recognition by the general public that Jews were not draft dodgers and cowards but had done their part in the war effort. The release in 1947 by Twentieth Century Fox of *Gentleman's Agreement* reflected this change in public opinion. It was the first serious Hollywood movie

1 I have argued for the importance of the war in my essay "The Impact of War: America's Jews and World War II," which is reprinted in my collection *A Unique People in a Unique Land: Essays on American Jewish History* (Brookline, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2022), ch. 4.

on American antisemitism and a recognition by the Hollywood moguls that antisemitism was now considered to be un-American and thus a fit topic for filmmaking. The film won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

At least five hundred and fifty thousand American Jews, including ten thousand women, served in the military during the war, and thirty-six thousand were awarded medals for valor and merit. Among these Jewish servicemen were four who would write the most famous American novels of the war: Joseph Heller (*Catch-22*), Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*), Leon Uris (*Battle Cry*), and Herman Wouk (*The Caine Mutiny*). Jews also composed the three most important musical compositions of the war: Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," Morton Gould's "American Salute," and Marc Blitzstein's "The Airborne Symphony." Although written during World War I, Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" became America's unofficial national anthem during World War II. And it was a Jew, Reform rabbi Roland Gittelsohn, who delivered the most famous American eulogy of the war.

Nineteen American Jewish families contributed six members to the military, and four families contributed eight. Over half of America's rabbis volunteered for military service, and three hundred and eleven were accepted. Françoise S. Ouzan also notes that 60 percent of Jewish doctors in America under the age of forty-five served in the military during the war. Nearly twenty-five thousand Jews in the American military were wounded, and eight thousand were killed in action. Over fifty Jewish families lost two sons, and one family lost three. In addition to the Jews in the military, hundreds of thousands of Jewish civilians contributed to paper and scrap iron drives, worked as air raid wardens, bought war bonds, cared for victory gardens, and were employed in armament factories, shipyards, and government agencies involved in war work.

The war affected Jews in the military in numerous ways, particularly by diminishing their insularity and insecurity. For many Jewish servicemen and women, the war was the first time they had close contact with gentiles, and, conversely, the first time that many gentiles came to know Jews on a first-name basis. And, as indicated in the plays of Neil Simon, military training in the boot camps in the South and West expanded knowledge of Jews of America beyond the large cities of the East and Midwest, where most had resided. Entering the military thus accelerated

the movement of Jews into the American mainstream. The military draft “was the greatest educational institution in the world,” said Harold U. Ribalow, a Jewish airman from the Bronx and future sportswriter. He served in North Africa, India, and Ceylon (102).

America’s Jews viewed Nazi Germany as a modern Haman, and military service as a religious and ethnic as well as a national imperative. This merging of ethnic-religious and national objectives heightened their love of country, and at no other time in their history were they so patriotic. The historian-rabbi Arthur Hertzberg recalled in his autobiography, *A Jew in America: My Life and a People’s Struggle for Identity*, that the country’s Jews took justifiable “pride not only in the tens of thousands of their young who had served with valor as ordinary soldiers, but especially in the strikingly large numbers of Jewish scientists and managers among those who had produced the munitions that made victory possible.” Jews now wished “to be thought of as part of the brave, undaunted, victorious America . . . we wanted our neighbors to think of as wrapped, together with them, in an American flag, preferably with the slogan Don’t Tread on Me written over it” (148–149).

Ouzan is a senior research associate at the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center of Tel Aviv University and has a particular interest in American Jewish history and World War II. Her book does not discuss the more general impact of the war on American Jewry. Rather, it focuses on “the uniqueness of GI war experiences, expressions of patriotism, and sense of self-sacrifice” and argues that the war accelerated the transformation of American Jews into Jewish Americans (xi). Note, for example, the use of “Jewish Americans,” not “American Jews,” in its subtitle. Participation in the military, Ouzan writes, shaped how American Jewish servicemen and women understood “what it means to be an American, at home and abroad; to safeguard freedom and democracy and fight discrimination wherever it rears its ugly head” (5).

The volume is interesting, well written, and based on extensive reading in primary sources, particularly the hundred or so reminiscences of Jewish veterans housed in the archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (New York), the Museum of Jewish Heritage (New York), the National Museum of American Jewish Military History (Washington), the Library of Congress (Washington), the United States Holocaust

Memorial Museum (Washington), and the National World War II Museum (New Orleans). The only other volume covering the same ground is Deborah Dash Moore's more impressionistic and personal *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (2004).

Ouzan's PhD is from the Sorbonne, and she taught at universities in France before relocating to Israel. This explains her book's extended examination of the British and American invasion of the French-speaking colonies of Algeria and Morocco in November 1942 (Operation Torch), culminating in the surrender of German forces in Tunisia in May 1943. She devotes far less space to assessing the more significant British-American-Canadian invasion of France in June 1944 (Operation Overlord), the advance of Allied armies across France and then into Germany, and the liberation of German concentration camps such as Dachau and Buchenwald. Only when they entered Germany did Jewish soldiers fully comprehend the tragedy of European Jewry and what the defeat of Germany meant for them as both Jews and Americans.

True to My God and Country resembles a smorgasbord. Its diverse chapters discuss the varied motives that encouraged Jews to enlist in the military; their diverse responses to the antisemitism they experienced while in the military; their encounter with Jewish communities in North Africa, India, and the Philippines; the experiences of Jewish women who served in the military (primarily in the Air Force); the imprisonment of Jewish servicemen by the Japanese; the bonds formed by Jews during the war with other Jews, gentiles, and even with Japanese prison guards; and the efforts of Jewish service personnel to display or disguise their Jewishness. Ouzan's central concern throughout is the impact of the war on the religious-ethnic identity of Jews in the military, many of whom were second-generation Americans who had grown up in homes with attenuated connections to Judaism and Jewish culture.

The issue of identity came to the fore for Jews when it came time to decide whether to choose or reject wearing dog tags stamped with an "H" for "Hebrew," where to be buried if killed in action, whether to attend Jewish religious services, and how to respond to the antisemitism of gentile servicemen and women. The war particularly impacted the American Zionist movement by convincing most American Jews of the need for a Jewish state. This was especially true for Jewish

servicemen and women, Ouzan notes, who were now empowered “both as Americans and as Jews,” and led some Jewish veterans, most notably Col. David Marcus, to join Israel’s military after the war (76). Identity has been the great theme of American Jewish history, and *True to My God and Country* is an important contribution to understanding the impact of the war in defining Jewish-American identity and how Jews perceived their place within American society.

This is not to say that *True to My God and Country* is without fault. Ouzan is so eager to overturn the image of the Jew as weak and craven that she has replaced one stereotype with another. All of her Jews were heroic, conscientious, tolerant, and patriotic; devoted family members; and embodiments of the best in American and Jewish culture. “The examples of brotherhood, helpfulness, and patriotism in this book,” Ouzan concludes, “make the case for the symbiosis between Jewish and American values, which have common aspiration to improve the world. . . . Their accomplishments and sacrifices, both as American service members and as Jews, will remain a source of inspiration for generations to come. War experiences left in their wake the seeds of a brighter new era” (193–195). One wonders whether this special pleading stems in part from Ouzan’s residence in Israel where the military is revered, where films and comic strips mocking the military are not to be found, and where those exempted from military service are abhorred.

Edward S. Shapiro is Professor Emeritus of History at Seton Hall University and the author of A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II; Crown Heights: Blacks, Jews, and the 1991 Brooklyn Riot; Reflections on American Jewish History and Identity; and A Unique People in a Unique Land: Essays on American Jewish History.

Derek Penslar, *Zionism: An Emotional State* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2023), 284pp.

Readers familiar with the many virtues of Derek Penslar’s vast scholarly oeuvre will no doubt appreciate *Zionism: An Emotional State*. Clocking in at under 250 pages, Penslar’s sleek new book recasts the movement’s

history in Palestine/Israel as well as in the diaspora with emotions—fears, anxieties, romantic desires, gratitude, and hatred, among other throbbing affective states—at its center. The very undertaking is a critical contribution to the subfield, which, as Penslar points out, has been dominated until now by intellectual, political, and social histories. Penslar’s trademark clarity of prose and breadth of historical analysis is an added bonus.

Penslar begins by reviewing conceptions of Zionism both among the movement’s historical actors and its latter-day critics. He challenges in chapter one the categories typically bandied about in the movement’s historiography. In place of forerunners, political Zionists, cultural Zionists, and other familiar typological fare, Penslar offers eight new ideal types. Of the many advantages of Penslar’s novel taxonomy, one is that it abandons vestigial categories that may have had meaning long ago but now fail to account for key changes in Israeli politics over the last three decades, like the collapse of the political left and the concomitant rise of a “Judaic Zionism” that has eclipsed the Zionist movement’s secularist past. He then, in chapter two, explores the ways in which a settler-colonial critique can elucidate but also tends to miss major features of the history of Zionism. Both chapters in isolation offer more invaluable insights than can be listed in a short review such as this, but their purpose in the book’s overarching project is not entirely clear given that they, in Penslar’s words, focus on “thought and action” rather than emotion (96).

Zionism then takes up the movement’s emotional history. Penslar argues that European Zionism prior to 1948 distinguished itself from other streams of modern Jewish politics in the passionate love its adherents expressed for the land of Palestine. The Zionist pioneers hoped to overcome the bodily shame and psychic inadequacy they believed was endemic to diaspora via amorous embrace of the territory they hoped to settle. This was in marked contrast to the pre-1948 Zionism that obtained among American Jews who harbored, to quote Penslar, a “confidence in a robust future for Jews at home in America” (130). American Jews evinced a Zionism not of transformative romance with the land upon which pioneers toiled but one of philanthropic solidarity for the plight of those striving to go to the land.

In striking this dichotomy, however, Penslar misses an opportunity to probe threadbare historiographical narratives about the differences between American and other Zionisms. While it is indeed true that few American Jews migrated to Palestine in these years or adopted the language of amorous desire, American Zionists in the early twentieth century engaged in a wide swath of cultural as much as philanthropic endeavors, produced their own battery of ideological theorists who rivaled European Zionists, and displayed a diverse emotional palette that included pessimism about the sustainability of Jewishness anywhere outside Palestine, including even the United States.

Versions of love for Israel, according to Penslar, ultimately did come to define American Zionism after 1948. Examining familiar cultural material such as Leon Uris's *Exodus* but also lesser-known artifacts like the comedic collaborations of Bob Booker and George Foster, Penslar maintains that what fueled American Jews' attachments to Israel in these years was less any commitment to American-style liberalism than immediate emotional needs, insecurities, and desires. This is another in the book's many contributions given that the historiography of American Zionism has been overly preoccupied until now with studying the synthesis of putative American and Zionist values.

Yet the book's tight focus on the emotional underpinnings of American Zionism rather than on the material history that has animated it leaves something to, well, be desired. Penslar avers, for instance, that young American Jews who visited Israel after the heady victory of the 1967 war often spoke of "falling in love" with the place because life there was "challenging, but precisely for that reason it was idealized as more authentic, altruistic, and meaningful" (153). But can we really understand the contrasting images American Jews so easily adopted between a bloodless suburban existence and the invigorating drama of the kibbutz without examining the economic, social, and cultural contours of middle-class American life in which Jews by the 1960s were so deeply ensconced?

Following an insightful chapter on the history of Zionists' fluctuating emotions qua great power support for Israel, Penslar trains his attention on an emotion firmly rooted in the present: the hatred of Zionism and the ways Zionists hate in turn. Here again Penslar serves up a bevy

of piercing observations about the variations of anti-Zionist hatred in Western and Arab countries, on the one hand, and the origins of a hatred for Arabs in the writing and activism of Meir Kahane that has achieved increasing popularity among Israeli Jews, on the other. Along the way, Penslar suggests that we may evaluate whether anti-Zionism is anti-Semitic by exposing the former's emotional underpinnings. An anti-Zionism spurred by disappointment with or anger over Israeli policies, in other words, may be distinguished from an anti-Zionism spurred by hatred of Jews. Penslar deserves credit for venturing out from the safe redoubt of clinical detachment in order to examine a topic of contemporary import that has become mired in controversy. It is not clear from his analysis, however, why anti-Zionism should be judged primarily by its proponent's emotional intent rather than by the real-world consequences that flow from the positions and policies its proponents advocate.

Regardless, *Zionism: An Emotional State* succeeds in shedding fascinating new light on a topic overburdened with attention both within and beyond the academy. Anyone with an interest in Zionism's many permutations in Israel and the diaspora, with the varieties of nationalism in modern times more broadly, or with the emotional turn in historiography would benefit from reading it.

Judah Bernstein holds a PhD in Jewish history from New York University. His dissertation explored themes of optimism and pessimism in the writings and activities of Zionists in the United States in the early twentieth century. He is currently pursuing a JD at New York University School of Law.

Laura Yares, *Jewish Sunday Schools: Teaching Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2023), 250 pp.

Historians study the past for a wide variety of reasons. One of the main reasons for learning about the past is to understand the present, especially when there is a crisis at hand that begs for explication. According to *A Census of Jewish Supplementary Schools in North America 2019–2020*, published in 2023 by the Jewish Education Project, part-time Jewish

education in the United States and Canada is experiencing a precipitous decline in enrollment. In the “Concluding Thoughts” to the *Census*, the survey team reports that “one could compare the 230,000 students in 2006–2007 to 135,087 in 2019–2020” (50). More subjectively, others have regularly described supplemental formal Jewish education as consisting of programs that “students love to hate.” Given such dire reports and characterizations, new historical research on Jewish Sunday schools and Hebrew schools is urgently needed by anyone concerned about the future of Judaism in America. *Jewish Sunday Schools: Teaching Religion in Nineteenth-Century America*, a 2023 study by Laura Yares, an assistant professor in the department of religious studies at Michigan State University, fills this need. It provides “an in-depth portrait of a massively understudied movement that acted as a vital means by which American Jews explored and reconciled their religious and national identities” from 1838, when the first Hebrew school opened its doors in Philadelphia during America’s Second Great Awakening, until 1910, when the Bureau of Jewish Education was founded in New York City.

Although *Jewish Sunday Schools* is Yares’s first academic trade book, she already has an impressive publication record in the areas of Jewish education, museum studies, and British Judaism. She earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Oxford University and her doctorate from Georgetown University and is clearly an important emerging figure in the study of American Judaism. *Jewish Sunday Schools* is particularly well informed by Yares’s training in religious studies and feminist historiography. Several chapters of the book, including her discussion of catechisms and floral culture, were anticipated in previously published scholarly articles. Most importantly, *Jewish Sunday Schools* is the first full-length critical study of the Hebrew Sunday school movement from its origin in the 1830s to the Progressive Age in America.

Informed by an impressive array of new primary materials as well as foundational secondary sources and current historiographical arguments, *Jewish Sunday School* is often at its best when framing questions. Surprisingly, the book does not report either on the initial rise of the Christian Sunday school in Europe, especially England, or on its structural relationship with the rise of public schools in the United States. Its introduction, titled “Making Jewish Education Religious,” is based in

part on the work of Leora Faye Batnitzky's 1994 *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* and includes a conclusion that carefully reconsiders the book's central typological question: "Is Judaism a Religion?" However, Yares explores neither the religious consequences of the denationalization of Judaism as a function of political emancipation in America and Western Europe nor the earlier development of the academic concept of religion in the eighteenth century by French encyclopedists.

The structure of the book is both logical and chronological. Chapter One "explores associations between the Sunday school and so-called women's religion" (17) but later correctly challenges that assertion based on a thesis argued by Zev Eleff in his 2016 book, *Who Rules the Synagogue? Religious Authority and the Formation of American Judaism*, which argued that male rabbis ultimately took control of American Judaism late in the nineteenth century. Curiously, Yares does not mention the establishment of Gratz College in 1895 as the first nondenominational Jewish normal school in the United States with its all-male staff and mixed gender student population.

Chapter Two focuses on catechisms, an educational genre previously explored by Yares, as the main textbooks of the American Jewish Sunday school and the problem of aligning texts written by males with the spirituality of the women teachers in the first day schools, a problem immediately recognized by Rebecca Gratz, the founder of the first Hebrew Sunday school. Chapter Three takes up the question of confirmation as the capstone ceremony of the Jewish Sunday school movement but does not share the ceremony's origins as a rebellion against the practice of Bar Mitzvah in early nineteenth-century Germany, as well as the radical innovation that admitted girls to formal Jewish education as early as 1811 in Central Europe. Chapter Three examines the linkage of confirmation with the holiday of Shavuot and the development of its floral culture, again a topic previously explored by Yares. It should be noted that the earliest confirmation services in Europe were not linked to Shavuot and its celebration of "the giving of the Torah."

"The focus on the material dimensions of the American Jewish Sunday school," perhaps the most original contribution of *Jewish Sunday School*, "continues in Chapter Four, which analyzes the emergence of

pedagogies designed to blend the didactic and the cerebral with material goods that engaged the senses and sentiments” (19). Chapter Five reflects Jonathan D. Sarna’s “Awakening Thesis,” which asserts that the established American Jewish community of the late nineteenth century—in this case mostly its women’s organizations—formulated the means for inculcating Judaism in the newly arriving immigrants from Eastern Europe and not vice-versa. The final chapter, typical of Yares’s work, focuses on the Sunday school in Reform Judaism, which she regularly references as the dominant form of nineteenth-century American Judaism. However, there were only six Reform synagogues out of two hundred Jewish congregations in the whole country in 1860, and only seventy-five Reform temples in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations when it was established in 1873.

Along these lines, Yares does not reference the so-called Sunday Sabbath movement in American Reform Judaism and the ultimate failure of a more complete realignment of Judaism’s most accommodationist approach to religion with Protestant Christianity. The book also does not explore the spread of Jewish Sunday schools and confirmation to the emergent Conservative movement early in the twentieth century. Strangely, Yares’s book ends prior to the creation of the Bat Mitzvah service in the 1920s, which ultimately leads to the devaluation both of confirmation and one-day-a-week schools in the American Jewish experience.

Jewish Sunday Schools is at its best when it exposes the problematic intersection of gender and faith in nineteenth-century American Judaism. To a certain extent, the ambiguities and deficiencies of Jewish Sunday schools doomed them to limited success from their beginning in 1838. Perhaps the author has it right when she opens her discussion with a paradoxical report by Isaac Mayer Wise, the principal builder of American Reform Judaism, who already lamented in 1847 that “they [American Jews] have introduced a phantom affair called a Sunday School...what fruits these few hours can bring forth hardly necessitates further description” (1). Yares provides us not only with that description but with much more to ponder.

Lance J. Sussman, PhD is rabbi emeritus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (Elkins Park, Pennsylvania) and a past president of the Board of Governors of nearby Gratz College, where he is also Professor of Jewish History. Sussman has taught at Princeton, Binghamton University (SUNY), and Hunter College. A historian of the American Jewish experience, his most recent book, Portrait of an American Rabbi: In His Own Words (2023) is a collection of his sermons from 2001 to 2022.

SELECT ACQUISITIONS 2023

Abrams, Jack and Miriam

Scrapbook and album of family photos and documents, photos of Jack Abrams in Europe during WWII, and correspondence including original drawings by Miriam Abrams, 1929–1958.

Received from Debby Abrams, Cincinnati, OH

Adventures in Judaism

Records and recordings of UAHC's Commission on Interfaith Activities' radio program "Adventures in Judaism" including master tapes, catalogues, and supplemental material, 1960–1989.

Received from Richard Boergersen, New York, NY

Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE)

Records of ARJE (formerly National Association of Temple Educators, NATE) including correspondence, executive board minutes, administrative files, placement records, and programming material, 1959–2014.

Received from Stacy Rigler, Association of Reform Jewish Educators, New York, NY

Bernstein family

Correspondence, writings, and personal material of Harold Bernstein of Cincinnati, with papers and videos related to Malcolm Bernstein and his work with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Cincinnati, 1888–1990.

Received from Malcolm Bernstein, Cincinnati, OH

B'nai B'rith Youth Organization / Hillel International

Records of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and Hillel International including administrative files, correspondence, programming material, publications, and photographs, 1976–2012.

Received from Andrew Bloom, Hillel International, Washington, DC

B'nai Israel Synagogue (High Point, NC)

Congregational records including administrative files, correspondence, scrapbooks, bulletins, and photographs, 1961–2006.

Received from B'nai Israel Synagogue, High Point, NC

Brin, Ruth Firestone

Accrual to papers of Ruth Firestone Brin, including music scores and correspondence, 1940s, undated.

Received from David Brin, Sonoma, CA

Central Synagogue (New York, NY)

Archives and records of Central Synagogue including administrative records, microfilm, rabbis' papers, photographs, cemetery and burial records, and architectural plans, 1845–2012.

Received from Central Synagogue, New York, NY

Congregation Beth Hillel (Walden, NY)

Collection of the Walden Jewish Community Center Congregation Beth Hillel Oral History Project including audio CDs, interview materials, and historical material about WJCC, 2006–2007.

Received from Michal Ben Ya'akov, Beit El, Israel.

Eger, Denise

Accrual to papers of Rabbi Eger, including correspondence, sermons and writings, prayers and life cycle services, and Congregation Kol Ami (West Hollywood, CA) records, 1985–2020.

Received from Denise Eger, West Hollywood, CA

Elwell, Sue Levi

Papers of Rabbi Elwell including correspondence, sermons and writings, 1970–2010.

Received from Sue Levi Elwell, Philadelphia, PA

Harby, Isaac

Collection consisting of the personal library of Isaac Harby (1788–1828), including books handwritten by Harby and Isaac Lopez, 1723–1828.

Received from Cliff Harby, Seattle, WA

Kingsley, Ralph

Papers of Rabbi Kingsley including correspondence, sermons and writings, student files, adult education materials, and U.S. Air Force chaplaincy files, 1956–1998.

Received from Ralph Kingsley, Sunny Isles, Beach, FL

Katchko-Gray, Deborah

Papers of Cantor Katchko-Gray including correspondence, press and news clippings, event programs and promotional material, 1992–2015.

Received from Deborah Katchko-Gray, Ridgefield, CT

Kroloff, Charles

Papers of Rabbi Kroloff of Temple Emanu-El (Westfield, NJ) including records from his tenure as President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1961–2009.

Received from Charles Kroloff, Westfield, NJ

Levinson, George L.

Collection of correspondence of the American Council for Judaism, from the records of George L. Levinson, 1947–1956.

Received from Thomas Kolsky, Lansdale, PA

Levy, Ruth

Collection of papers of longtime HUC-JIR Cincinnati receptionist, Ruth Levy, including correspondence, photo albums, and HUC-JIR material, 1983–2002.

Received from Joe Levy, Cincinnati, OH

Limmer, Seth

Papers of Rabbi Limmer and Chicago Sinai Congregation including correspondence, sermons, religious education material, and files pertaining to the compilation of the Sinai Prayer Book, 1999–2022.

Received from Seth Limmer, Chicago, IL

Magnus, Eleanor O.

Digital scans of scrapbook compiled and illustrated by Magnus along with genealogical and other Magnus family records, 1880–2002.

Received from Nancy Magnus Kopick, Cincinnati, OH

Mersky family

Collection of genealogical research material compiled by Shirley Mersky in writing her family history “From Suwalki to St. Ignace”, including annotated photos and family correspondence; with material relating to Morris Mersky’s military training and service, 1872–1998.

Received from Elizabeth Mersky, Yellow Springs, OH

Neusner, Jacob

Accrual to papers of Jacob Neusner and family, including correspondence, student files, honorary degrees and diplomas, and Neusner Memorial Lecture series material, 1978–2017.

Received from Suzanne Neusner, Rhinebeck, NY

Nussbaum, Max

Papers of Rabbi Nussbaum including correspondence, writings, subject files, and photographs, 1941–1947.

Received from Temple Israel of Hollywood, Hollywood, CA

Oppenheim, David

Collection of family history material compiled by David Oppenheim including photographs, family trees, genealogies, correspondence, and other material, 1910–2023.

Received from David Oppenheim, Heriot Bay, BC, Canada

Sarna, Jonathan D.

Papers of Dr. Sarna including correspondence, writings, academic advise files and papers, and research files, 1981–2010.

Received from Jonathan D. Sarna, West Newton, MA

Sasso, Dennis and Sandy

Papers of Rabbis Dennis and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, including sermons and writings, prayers and services, correspondence, photographs and trip materials, and files of Congregation Beth-El Zedek (Indianapolis, IN), 1973–2023.

Received from Dennis and Sandy Sasso, Indianapolis, IN

Schwartz, Eleanor R.

Personal papers of Eleanor Schwartz, Associate Director of NFTY, Associate Director and Executive Director of NFTS, 1958–2009.

Received from Laura Schwartz Harari, Laguna Woods, CA

Smith, H.D. Uriel

Papers of Rabbi Smith including sermons, academic writing, rabbinic thesis and additional student papers, and correspondence, 1972–2017.

Received from Hanna Smith, Lexington, KY

Spiegel, S. Arthur

Personal and professional papers lawyer and Judge S. Arthur Spiegel, who served as district Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, including law school notes and papers, correspondence, case files, and memoirs, 1948–2007.

Received from the Spiegel family, Cincinnati, OH

Sussman, Leonard

Papers of Leonard R. Sussman related to his activities with the American Council for Judaism, including letters honoring the ACJ's 20th anniversary from Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman, 1940–1979.

Received from Mark Sussman, Montreal, QC, Canada

Temple Chai (Long Grove, IL)

Congregational records including administrative files, Sisterhood and Religious School records, photo albums, bulletins, and papers of Rabbi Stephen Hart, 1983–2023.

Received from Alison Siegel Lewin, Temple Chai, Long Grove, IL

Temple Tremont (Scarsdale, NY) and Temple Emanuel (Yonkers, NY)

Early archives of Temple Tremont and Temple Emanuel including scrapbooks, nearprint, and ledgerbooks, 1906–1973.

Received from Scarsdale Synagogue, Scarsdale, NY

Trepp, Leo

Papers of Rabbi Trepp including correspondence with Mordecai Kaplan, 1945–1976.

Received from Gunda Trepp, San Francisco, CA

Untermeyer Family

Untermeyer family papers and correspondence between Frank Untermeyer and Richard Hawkins, 1889–2001.

Received from Richard Hawkins, Wolverhampton, UK

Weiland, Richard

Papers of lawyer and philanthropist Richard Weiland including correspondence, speeches, scrapbooks, photographs, awards and certificates, and audio/visual material, 1970–2022.

Received from Jeanne Weiland, Cincinnati, OH

Zedek, Michael

Papers of Rabbi Zedek including correspondence, sermons, writings, and records of Emanuel Congregation (Chicago, IL), Temple B'nai Jehudah (Kansas City, MO), and the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, 1971–2008.

Received from Michael Zedek, Chicago, IL

Zeldin, Michael

Papers of Dr. Zeldin including correspondence, writing, and records of HUC-JIR Rhea Hirsch School of Education, and program records for Day Schools for the 21st Century, a joint program of HUC-JIR and PARDeS, 1994–1999.

Received from HUC-JIR, Los Angeles, CA

Zerin, Edward

Professional papers of Rabbi Zerin including correspondence, sermons, academic writing, and research files, 1958–2003.

Received from Judith Kneeter, San Francisco, CA

Zoberman, Israel

Papers and writings of Rabbi Zoberman including remarks printed in the Congressional Records on the war in Ukraine; letters of recommendation to the board of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; and news article on Zoberman's family history, 2011–2023.

Received from Israel Zoberman, Virginia Beach, VA

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