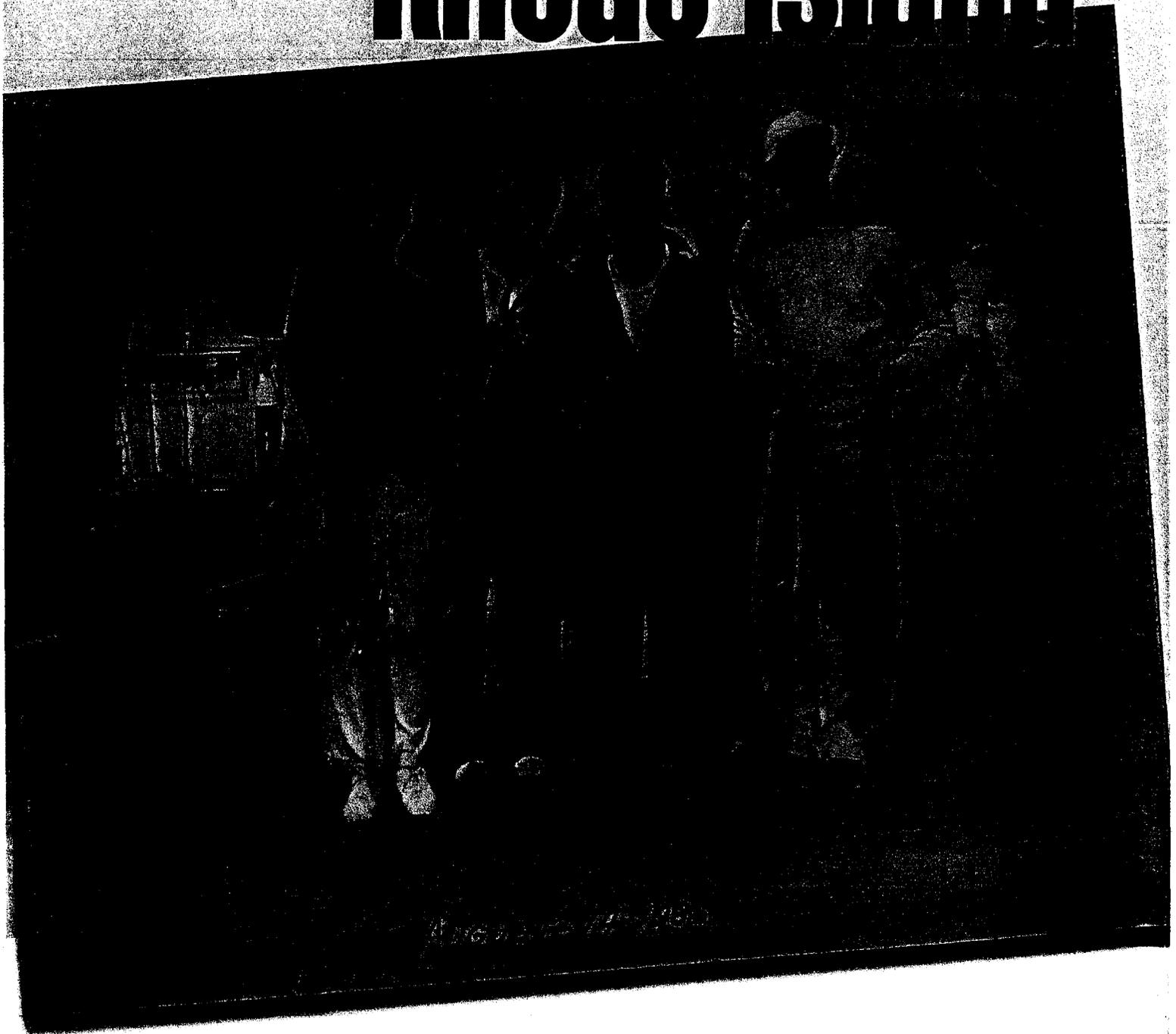


# *The* **Jews of** **Rhode Island**



*Photograph of the Jews of Rhode Island*

# Introduction The Jews of Rhode Island

ELLEN SMITH & JONATHAN D. SARNA

What we know as Rhode Island began in 1636 when Roger Williams, an independent-minded “godly minister” banished from Massachusetts for propagating new and dangerous opinions, founded a new colony for himself and his followers on Narragansett Bay. He called it Providence. Two years later, another group of banished dissenters, led by the even more independent-minded Anne Hutchinson, bought the island of Aquidneck (Rhode Island) from the local natives and established Pocasset, renamed after a quarrel over governance, Portsmouth. This quarrel precipitated yet a third split, and in 1639 dissenters from Portsmouth moved to the southern end of the island and founded Newport. Still another group of dissenters founded the settlement of Warwick in 1643.

None of these headstrong founders were Jews, nor do we know for certain that any Jews lived in Rhode Island prior to 1678. But some of the ideas that underlay Rhode Island’s creation would, in time, have dramatic impact on Jews. Roger Williams hinted at this in 1644 when, on a visit to England to obtain Rhode Island’s original charter, he argued for according Jews liberty of conscience and sided with those who advocated their readmission into England. Subsequently, Rhode Island’s 1663 charter became the first in North America that provided for religious liberty as part of a colony’s organic law. (By contrast, Maryland’s Act of Toleration of 1649 was only a legislative statute, and in any case only applied to those “professing to believe in Jesus Christ.”) According to the Rhode Island charter, which continued in force until replaced by the state constitution of 1842: “Noe person within the sayd colonye at any tyme hereafter, shall bee any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion . . . all and everye person and persons may . . . at all tymes hereafter, freely and fullye have and enjoye his and their owne judgments and consciences, in matter of religious concernments, throughout the tract of lande hereafter mentioned; they behaving themselves peaceable and quietlie, and not using this libertie to lycentiousnesse and profanenesse, nor to the civill injurye or outward disturbance of any others.”<sup>1</sup>

New Netherland, though a far more heterogeneous colony than Rhode Island, espoused a quite different policy. In 1654, when a boatload of Jews landed in Dutch New Amsterdam and sought permission to settle, its governor, Peter Stuyvesant, attempted to keep them out. The Jews, he believed, were “deceitful,” “very repugnant,” and “hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ.” He asked the directors of the Dutch West India Company to “require them in a friendly way to depart” lest they “infect and trouble this new colony.” In a subsequent letter, he warned that “giving them liberty we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists.” For pragmatic reasons, the Dutch West India Company overrode him. Influenced by Jews who owned stock in the Company, and realizing

that Jewish traders could strengthen the colony's economic position, it granted Jews permission to live, travel, and trade in the colony "provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or the community, but be supported by their own nation."<sup>2</sup> The colony did not, however, extend freedom of conscience to Jews; in fact, it denied them the right to public worship, and so did the British when they captured the colony and renamed it New York. At least on paper, seventeenth-century Rhode Island granted Jews many more liberties than did any of its surrounding colonies.

The arrival of Jews in Rhode Island put the colony to the test. Around 1677 a group of Sephardim (Jews of Iberian descent) from Barbados arrived in Newport, likely motivated by the burgeoning trade between these two communities. A year later, the Jews purchased a "piece of land for a burial place," a persuasive sign that they had decided to settle permanently.<sup>3</sup> In 1684, they even received legal protection. The Assembly assured them that "they may Expect as good Protection here, as any Strainger being not of Our Nation residing amongst us in this his Majesties Collony Ought to have, being Obedient to his Majesties laws."<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island had already provided a tolerant home for schismatic Seventh Day Baptists, who observed the Sabbath on the seventh day, as well as for large numbers of widely reviled Quakers. The Jews, however, were the first non-Christians to receive protection, albeit as strangers.

Shortly thereafter, the small community of Jews disbanded, for reasons that remain unclear but may have been related to their alleged violations of the English Navigation Acts.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the case, the first Newport Jewish community, short-lived as it was, established a precedent. It demonstrated that in the colony of Rhode Island Jews could differ from their neighbors in matters of religion, and still enjoy freedom of conscience.

Individual Jews turned up from time to time in Newport following the departure of the Barbados Jews, and an old map from 1712 discloses the existence of a "Jews Street" (now part of Bellevue Avenue) perpendicular to Griffin Street (now Touro Street), opposite the cemetery.<sup>6</sup> But while New York's Jewish community became well established in the early eighteenth century, and built a synagogue in 1730, the Jewish community of Newport only really took off in the 1740s. It was then that the community entered its pre-Revolutionary "golden age."

Trade and commerce fueled Newport's golden age. Growing economic ties with the West Indies, privateering, and the importation of slaves and contraband (especially sugar and molasses) brought new wealth to the community and resulted in a dramatic population increase—more than 40 percent in eighteen years. Jews were among those who immigrated at this time. At least nine New York Jewish merchants settled in Newport in the 1740s, most of them Sephardim and several of them former *conversos* who had practiced their faith underground in Spain and Portugal and returned to the practice of Judaism with their arrival on American soil. Thereafter, the community grew slowly. At its peak in the 1770s, it numbered about two hundred men, women and children, comprising roughly 2 percent of Newport's total population and about 10 percent of its substantial merchants.<sup>7</sup>

Jewish religious life in Newport developed as the community did. By 1756, a synagogue was formally organized. Three years later, fundraisers from Palestine began to include Newport on their itinerary—a sure sign that its Jewish community was gaining recognition. In 1759, the community began to build a synagogue of its own—only the second synagogue built by Jews in the American colonies. The synagogue was completed in 1763, and that same year Isaac Touro was appointed *hazan* (reader). For all intents and purposes, he served as the Jewish community's minister.

Newport's Jews enjoyed freedom of worship, abundant economic opportunities, and the right to live and work freely, but they continued to face political discrimination in such areas as voting and office holding. This imbalance was typical of most colonial American settings. But perhaps less typical was the response of Newport's Jews. In 1762, Newport Jewish merchants Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizer applied to the Rhode Island general court for citizenship. Under the terms of the British Naturalization Act of 1740, those in residence for seven consecutive years in a British colony, regardless of religion, could become British citizens. Lopez and Elizer were in compliance with all terms of the Act. But the courts turned them down, claiming that the law applied only to underpopulated regions and that local law limited citizenship to believing Christians—dubious claims in both cases. Defeated but unbowed, Lopez crossed the border to be naturalized in Massachusetts and Elizer was naturalized in New York. In so doing, both men revealed their determination to fight, as Jews, for their rights.<sup>8</sup>

Moses Michael Hays likewise insisted that his status as a Jew be legally accommodated. In 1775, when asked with seventy-five other men to sign a declaration of loyalty to the American colonies, the merchant refused, objecting to having to sign the oath "upon the true faith of a Christian." He pressed his case until finally the offending phrase was removed, and only then did he append his name to the document. Years later his nephew, Abraham Touro, raised in his uncle's home, maintained this family tradition of pride in Jewish heritage. Presenting himself to the Boston selectmen in 1816, he requested that the town clerk "set forth in the records that he was of the Jewish faith and belonged to a synagogue."<sup>9</sup>

Proud as they were of their faith, Newport's colonial Jews were careful not to flaunt it. Centuries of diaspora experience had taught them to practice great discretion on the outside, not drawing excessive attention to themselves, while glorying in their faith on the inside, where tradition reigned supreme. In building their synagogue in 1763, that is just what they did. Designed by famed Newport architect Peter Harrison, the elegant synagogue was modeled in part after the Amsterdam and London Sephardic synagogues, but also after the classical models Harrison used and would use in his construction of Newport buildings like the Brick Market (1772) and the Redwood Library (1748). On the outside, it neither identified itself with any Jewish symbol nor did it challenge the pre-eminence of neighboring churches. It resembled in outer form the houses of worship of Protestant dissenters. Like Newport's Jews themselves, the synagogue blended with the neighborhood and the religious landscape but made its presence known.<sup>10</sup>

Inside, meanwhile, the synagogue provided worshipers with a warm feeling of tradition: the sanctuary resembled those of Sephardic synagogues in Europe and the West Indies. A central bimah (reader's platform) faced the aron kodesh (holy ark) that held the Torahs. Twelve columns with elaborate capitals supported the women's gallery on three sides above. Light-colored walls with contrasting trim, candelabrum, and the natural light let in by the clear arched windows provided a surprisingly bright space that enabled worship as sundown approached each day. Inside, Jewish symbols were elaborate and dominant. There was no quiet or hidden Jewish life here.

Similar approaches were taken by the Jews themselves. Newport's Jews dressed like other Newport citizens and occupied houses and workplaces among them. Only small details set them apart. A portrait of Billah Abigail Franks painted in New York, probably in the 1730s, depicts her as an aspiring English-style aristocrat, harkening to her family's English Askenazik roots. A portrait made of Sarah Rivera Lopez in the 1770s by Gilbert Stuart likewise has her looking like the colonial British matrons of her day. But there is a

nod to her Sephardic background in the Portuguese lace she wears and, perhaps, in her dark complexion. Nevertheless, on the streets, one could not likely have distinguished a Jewish woman by her outward appearance. In their homes, meanwhile, women and men often did display the ritual objects of their faith. Colonial wills and inventories mention such family Jewish heirlooms as Torah scrolls, prayerbooks, candlesticks, kiddush cups and shofars. In addition, many Jews kept the Jewish dietary laws at home (maintaining a qualified ritual slaughterer and watching over imported food occupied much communal time and effort), and some, we know, scrupulously kept the Sabbath—none more scrupulously than Aaron Lopez, whose ships did not set sail on that day.<sup>11</sup>

Newport Jews lived among their Christian neighbors and worked alongside them. Indeed, Newport may well have been the most religiously integrated of all the colonies. Whereas New York Jews lived primarily in two districts and in close proximity to one another, Newport's Jews were more widely dispersed.<sup>12</sup> Newport's Jews also engaged in economic partnerships with their neighbors. The United Company of Spermaceti Chandlers, established in 1761 in an attempt to control the prices of whalehead matter, consisted of nine founding firms, two of which were Jewish, while another represented a Jewish-Christian partnership.<sup>13</sup> The Redwood Library also brought Jews and Christians together. As a rule, local Jews and Christians supported one another's causes, contributing mutually to the building of cultural and religious facilities.

This is not to say that religious prejudice was absent in Newport. The refusal to naturalize Lopez and Elizer, for example, clearly reflected anti-Jewish animus—so much so that Ezra Stiles, minister of Newport's Second Congregational Church and a friend of many local Jews, concluded sadly that "the Jews will never become incorporated with the p[eo]ple of America, any more than in Europe, Asia and Africa." Stiles himself, along with other local Christians, worked to convert the Jews, seeing this as a prerequisite to the coming of God's Kingdom. Rising tensions that accompanied the onset of the American Revolution led some local citizens to consider Jews as a group to be traitors, particularly since the Rev. Touro and various other local Jews supported the British. In sum, the relationship between Jews and their neighbors in Newport was characterized by a substantial degree of ambivalence. Fascination and close relations with individual Jews went hand in hand with suspicion and prejudice directed against Jews as a group.<sup>14</sup>

The American Revolution sounded the death knell for the Jewish community of Newport. The British invasion brought with it death and destruction. From Leicester, Massachusetts, where he had taken refuge, Aaron Lopez thanked God for giving him the fortitude to escape in time, and mourned that Jews less fortunate than himself were now unable to obtain kosher food and "were reduced to the alternative of leaving [living] upon chocolate and coffe[e]." He described a Newport dwelling that "sufer'd much," a former neighbor "found dead at his house," another neighbor whose wife "is crazy," and what he lamented most of all, "that the vertue of several of our reputable ladys has been attacked and sullied by our destructive enemys."<sup>15</sup> Though some Jews returned to Newport following the Revolution, its economy never recovered. By the mid 1790s, the Torah scrolls of the synagogue were sent to New York for safekeeping. Some old family members remained, but their numbers steadily dwindled. On October 5, 1822, according to a surviving diary, the last Jew left Newport for New York.<sup>16</sup>

Before then, however, Newport served as the locus of what may have been the most important exchange of letters in all of American Jewish history, between the "Hebrew Congregation in Newport" and President George Washington. The Newport congregation prepared its letter in the form of an address to be read out on the occasion of the

President's visit to the city on August 17, 1790, following Rhode Island's ratification of the Constitution. The address, drafted by Hazan Moses Seixas, paralleled other letters that Washington received from religious bodies of different denominations and followed a long established custom associated with the ascension of kings. Redolent with biblical and liturgical language, the address noted past discrimination against Jews, praised the new government for "generously affording to all liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship," and thanked God "for all of the blessings of civil and religious liberty" that Jews now enjoyed under the Constitution. Washington, in his reply sent to the community after his return to New York, reassured the Jewish community about what he correctly saw as its central concern—religious liberty. Appropriating a phrase contained in the Hebrew congregation's original letter, he characterized the United States government as one that "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." He described religious liberty, following Thomas Jefferson, as an inherent natural right, distinct from the indulgent religious "toleration" practiced by the British and much of enlightened Europe, where Jewish emancipation was so often linked with demands for Jewish "improvement." Finally, echoing the language of the prophet Micah (4:4), he hinted that America might itself prove something of a Promised Land for Jews, a place where they would "merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid." Jews rightly understood the President's letter as an explicit guarantee that freedoms spelled out broadly in the Constitution applied to them. The letter was frequently reprinted and is now read annually as part of a public commemoration in Newport.<sup>17</sup>

Even as the Jewish presence in Rhode Island came to a temporary end in the years following the Revolution, the synagogue survived. This was entirely due to the farsightedness of Abraham Touro of Boston and later his brother Judah Touro of New Orleans, sons of Hazan Isaac Touro, who had left Newport following the Revolution and died shortly thereafter. In 1822, just as Newport's last resident passed from the scene, Abraham financed a new brick wall for the Newport Jewish cemetery, securing its upkeep despite the absence of a Jewish community. With Abraham's untimely death later that year, his estate left five thousand dollars for the upkeep of the cemetery and street leading up to it, and ten thousand dollars in trust to the State of Rhode Island for the care and preservation of the synagogue. This may well have been the first bequest anywhere in America for the preservation of a vacant building. It marks the beginning of what we now call "historic preservation."<sup>18</sup> When Judah Touro died in New Orleans in 1854, he continued Abraham's efforts to preserve Newport's Jewish spaces. His ten thousand dollar bequest endowed a fund to support a religious leader for the synagogue and provided money to repair and embellish the cemetery. The present granite fence and archway resulted from his gift. Well into the nineteenth century, the legacy of colonial Jewish Newport—to keep Judaism visible and viable—persisted.

For half a century, as the Jewish population in the United States grew from about 3,000 in 1820 to about 200,000 in 1870, the Jewish community of Rhode Island languished. Immigrant Jews found greater opportunity elsewhere. Those Jews who did find their way to the state, moreover, settled in Providence, the capital and commercial center of the state, where Jews acquired a burial ground in 1849. Newport, having become a resort community, now only saw Jews in the summertime. By 1854, a sufficient number of Jews resided in Providence to form its first synagogue, B'nai Israel. The congregation, founded by Central European Jews, initially followed the Sephardic rite, perhaps in



tribute to its Newport predecessor. But the resemblance ended there, for between 1850 and 1865, the number of Jewish names listed in Providence directories never exceeded twenty-two, most of them merchants, and the congregation did not have a building of its own. In 1871 a petition declared there to be “thirty-five male members of the Jewish Church, and of these only about twenty are Church members.” During these years, neither the synagogue nor the Jewish community thrived.<sup>19</sup>

Rhode Island’s Jewish population finally began to grow in the 1870s, thanks both to immigration and to increasing opportunities. In 1877, B’nai Israel transformed itself into a “Moderate Reform” congregation and saw its membership climb to nearly eighty families. A year later, the first official census of the American Jewish community estimated the state’s Jewish population at one thousand.<sup>20</sup> As the state’s industrial base broadened and its need for workers increased, Jews, like other immigrant groups, moved in and settled.

Rhode Island was the first state to industrialize in early America. In 1790 Samuel Slater, financed by Rhode Island merchant and industrialist Moses Brown, opened a textile mill along the Blackstone River. Rhode Island’s proximity to granite to build factories and excellent water supply to power them, along with the introduction of power looms in 1817 and multiple navigable ports to move goods in and out, resulted in an explosion of factory building before the Civil War. Pawtucket and villages in the Blackstone Valley led the way. By the 1870s, Rhode Island’s industries focused on textile and jewelry production and the auxiliary enterprises that supported them, including metalworking. Between the 1880s and the end of World War I, Rhode Island’s textile and jewelry production would lead the nation.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond its physical resources, Rhode Island accommodated the people needed to run the factories and production lines. The state’s location close to the immigrant entryport of New York City made it a magnet for newcomers seeking work. As early as 1870, Rhode Island had the highest percentage of foreign-born residents in the country.<sup>22</sup> Its immigrant population and ethnic diversity would remain among the highest in the nation beyond World War II.

Rhode Island’s industrial character provided opportunities as well as challenges to immigrants. When business was good, employment was generally plentiful. But work in the textile and jewelry industries was seasonal and subject to unpredictable fluctuation in demand. Much of the process could be done at home, and piece-work employment was common. The system could thus yield flexible employment patterns, enabling women and children, as well as men, to work. But whether in home or factory, wages remained low and uncertain. State census data from 1900 to 1915 shows that Providence textile, jewelry, machinist, and day workers had the “highest proportion of unemployment” of any sector.<sup>23</sup>

Jews experienced both the benefits and pitfalls of Rhode Island industry. As many as fifteen to twenty thousand Jewish immigrants settled in Rhode Island, part of the more than two million immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe who migrated to America from the 1870s to 1924, swelling the state’s Jewish population to 25,000. Many of them went into the state’s traditional industries.

Robert Posner’s story is in many ways typical, though at the later end of the immigration.<sup>24</sup> He was born in Pforzheim, Germany, in 1909, where his family was in the jewelry business. His father and uncle manufactured “things like cigarette cases, compacts, bag frames for mesh bags” and wholesaled jewelry. Posner started in the business at age fif-

teen. His father died in 1933, one month before Hitler came to power, but Robert did not leave Germany until May 1938. In New York, Posner had trouble finding work until "an old Jewish man . . . said, 'You shouldn't be here, you should go to Providence.'" Posner did. He began by working for several other Jewish jewelry firms, left and opened his own business with minimal cash and a partner, dissolved the partnership, started again. He and his wife, Lottie, finally started Rolo (for Robert and Lottie) Manufacturing Company with a designer/partner who stayed for eighteen years. The firm manufactured necklaces, bracelets, pins, and earrings. Posner did all the selling for nearly two decades before hiring a salesman. The firm employed four or five people, several for thirty or more years. But Robert and Lottie continued to take work home.

Posner died in 1996. In the early 1990s, Rolo still employed 150 people and manufactured costume jewelry year-round. Clients included an international array of department stores (whose products often sold under a local brand name). Though Posner hoped to see a fourth generation in the family business, he knew that most small Jewish jewelry firms had already gone out of business. Many had not survived the Great Depression; others passed out of family hands when children went into other occupations.

Immigrant Jews' backgrounds in the rag and textile industries, in shoemaking, in small artisan crafts, and in peddling and shopkeeping translated well in the United States. Especially in New England, the national center for the textile and shoe industries, Jews found an excellent occupational match. Rhode Island was no exception. In 1900, according to the Providence city directory, the largest employment categories listed for Jews were peddling (311), jewelry (152), tailor (134), clerk (129), clothing (99), grocer (69), shoemaker (66), junk dealer (53), and laborers (53).<sup>25</sup> The 205 individuals employed in jewelry and as laborers made industrial employment the second-largest category of Jewish employment in Providence. The number was probably even higher if some Jews employed in "clothing" actually worked in the textile mills.<sup>26</sup> In only a few communities beyond the large industrial cities (like New York and Chicago) did such a high percentage of Jews labor with their hands in industrial settings.

Judith E. Smith, in her 1985 book *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence Rhode Island, 1900—1940*, compared the Jewish households on Smith Hill (near Providence's North End, where 74 percent of the households were Jewish) and Italian households on Federal Hill (where 92 percent of the households were Italian). Looking at data from the 1900, 1915, and 1935 city directories, together with state census data, she traced a single generation of Jewish involvement in Rhode Island's industries. In the early twentieth century, 17 percent of Jewish men listed "laborer" or "factory operative" as their "first recorded job" (vs. 47 percent of Italian men). But by 1915, no Jewish men listed themselves as "laborer," and only 8 percent listed themselves as "factory operatives," a number that dropped to 4 percent of their "last recorded jobs." For Italian men, "laborer" and "factory operative" remained dominant: 33 percent in 1915 and 36 percent as a last recorded job. Jews, according to Smith's data, entered the labor pool upon arrival and left quickly thereafter, moving into the more traditional modes of Jewish employment, especially small shopkeeping.<sup>27</sup>

Women worked, too. For both Jewish and Italian wives, keeping boarders and "wage-earning relatives" served as their chief source of income. Twenty-nine percent of Italian women and 17 percent of Jewish women took in boarders between 1915 and 1935. During that same period, 4 percent of Italian women worked as shopkeepers, as

did 11 percent of Jewish women. Overall, 59 percent of Italian women and 70 percent of Jewish women did not report wage-earning work, but that, of course, does not mean that they sat idle.<sup>28</sup> Official numbers rarely record services provided by women in family businesses, in the home, or even as community volunteers.

Finally, children worked, often in the same occupation as their fathers. In 1915, Smith records that 95 percent of sons over age 15 in Italian homes worked for wages, and 67 percent of sons in Jewish homes did as well. For daughters, 78 percent of those over 15 in Italian homes worked, as did 58 percent of daughters in Jewish homes. In 1935, 73 percent of Jewish sons and 70 percent of Jewish daughters age fifteen or over still worked (compared to 80 percent and 72 percent for Italian children).<sup>29</sup> That trend would persist until World War II.

Curiously, unlike New York and Chicago, a strong Jewish labor movement did not develop in Rhode Island, notwithstanding the comparatively large number of Jews who might have benefited from one. Paul Buhle, in this volume, suggests that the small size of the Jewish community was responsible. Rhode Island Jews met their social and communal needs instead in non-union socialist movements like the Workmen's Circle and labor Zionism. In any event, most Jews in Rhode Island did not remain laborers past the first immigrant generation. Like so many immigrant Jews, they were neither the sons of industrial laborers nor the fathers of industrial laborers. On the other hand, Rhode Island Jews did not move into the professional and managerial classes at the rate that other Jews did. In 1987, fully half of Rhode Island's Jewish adults were sales, clerical, or service workers, as compared to only a quarter of Jewish adults employed in Boston.<sup>30</sup>

If the economic history of Rhode Island's Jewish community was somewhat distinctive, so too were some of its residential patterns. The state's Jewish community never surpassed 30,000. Even at its peak, in 1937, it had fewer Jews than the city of Milwaukee. Today Rhode Island's Jewish population is estimated at 16,000 (1.5 percent of the entire state population), far fewer Jews than are found in the small Boston suburb of Newton. But it remains a community with several distinctive features. First, Rhode Island Jews are loyal: fully 83 percent, in a 1987 survey, had lived in the state for more than a decade. The comparable figure for Jews nationwide is 61 percent. In 1940, this trend was even more evident: only 2 percent of Providence's Jewish families reported that their nearest child lived in another city. Fifty-nine percent of the families studied had their closest (adult) child at the same address, and 86 percent reported their nearest adult child within ten blocks.<sup>31</sup> Rhode Island Jews also display stability in their family lives: the Jewish community's divorce rate is half that of New York's. The intermarriage rate among Jews is also at the low end of the spectrum, far below that of Seattle, Denver, New York, or Boston. Finally, Rhode Island Jews, since World War II, have tended to identify with their state, not just with their local community. While Jews in nearby cities (like Boston, Hartford, or New Haven), display local loyalties and view themselves as part of a local community, as evidenced even by their local Jewish history projects, Rhode Island Jews share a common Jewish federation, a common Jewish newspaper, and a common Jewish historical society.<sup>32</sup>

In many ways, indeed, the Rhode Island Jewish community retains the character of a traditional small town. Many Jewish Rhode Islanders know virtually every Jew in their community; many are related to one another by blood and marriage; many attended the same schools; and many belong to the same synagogues and organizations. The low rate of Jewish in-migration to Rhode Island, along with the relatively low rate of out-

migration, reinforces these trends, creating a localism that has strengthened the bonds of community and the commitment of Jews to one another. The traditions of headstrong dissent that shaped Rhode Island's early history have given way, at least in the Jewish community, to an understanding of the need to work together.

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#### NOTES

1. Reprinted in Bernard Schwartz, *The Roots of the Bill of Rights* (New York: Chelsea, 1971), 1:96-98.
2. Samuel Oppenheim, "The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654-1664: Some New Matter on the Subject," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 18 (1909), 4-37.
3. Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 1:314-317. Marcus finds "no evidence" to substantiate claims of an earlier community.
4. Colony Records 2:111 as quoted in Sydney V. James, *The Colonial Metamorphoses in Rhode Island* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000), 109.
5. The Huguenot (French Protestant) church also lasted only a short time. It was founded in 1686 and collapsed four years later; *ibid.*, 110. For the court cases that may have frightened the Newport Jews away, see Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* (New York: Bloch, 1936), 40-44.
6. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, opposite p. 19, 38, 49.
7. Marilyn Kaplan, "The Jewish Merchants of Newport, 1749-1790" in this volume.
8. Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 57-59.
9. Ellen Smith, "Strangers and Sojourners: The Jews of Colonial Boston," in *The Jews of Boston*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Ellen Smith (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1995), 35-36, 41. The synagogue Touro referred to was probably Shearith Israel, to which he paid periodic dues.
10. Theodore Lewis, "Touro Synagogue, Newport, R.I." *Newport History* 48 (summer 1975), 281-320; Nancy H. Schless, "Peter Harrison, the Touro Synagogue, and the Wren City Church," *Winterthur Portfolio* 8 (1973), 187-200.
11. Ellen Smith, "Portraits of a Community: The Image and Experience of Early American Jews," in Richard Brilliant, *Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1997), 9-21; Jonathan D. Sarna, "Colonial Judaism," in David L. Barquist Myer Myers: *Jewish Silversmith in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 8-23.
12. Leo Hershkowitz, "Some Aspects of the New York Jewish Merchant and Community," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 66 (September 1976), 11.
13. Stanley F. Chyet, *Lopez of Newport* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 46.
14. Sarna and Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience*, 58; Arthur A. Chiel, "Ezra Stiles and the Jews: A Study in Ambivalence," *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (New York, Ktav, 1976), 63-76.
15. *American Jewish Archives* 27 (November 1975), 157-158; Chyet, *Lopez of Newport*, 161.
16. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, 216, 225.
17. This paragraph is adapted from Sarna, *American Judaism*, ch. 2. For the correspondence, see Blau and Baron, *Jews of the U.S. Documentary History*, 8-11; Sarna and Dalin, *Religion and State*, 179-182. The editor of Jefferson's papers suggests that Jefferson may even have drafted Washington's reply to the Jews of Newport; see Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), vol. 19, 610n.
18. See the comments of Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington published in *The Record* 25 (2002), 16; the wills of both Touro are reprinted in Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, 291-295.
19. Seebert J. Goldowsky, *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island* (Providence: Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, 1989), 1-13, 27.
20. Jacob R. Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984* (Lanham, Md., University Press of America, 1990), 200.
21. Naida D. Weisberg, ed., *Diamonds Are Forever, but Rhinestones Are for Everyone: An Oral History of the Costume Jewelry Industry of Rhode Island* (Providence: The Providence Jewelry Museum, 1999), 1-10. See Meckle in this volume.

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- 22. Ibid.
- 23. Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Jewish and Italian Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 20.
- 24. See Posner oral history in Weisberg, *Diamonds Are Forever*, 130-133.
- 25. See chart in Marvin Pitterman, "Some Casual Observations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 3, no. 1 (November 1958), 44-54.
- 26. Ibid.
- 27. Smith, *Family Connections*, table 2-1, 37.
- 28. Ibid., chart, 46.
- 29. Ibid., charts, 59, 68, 74.
- 30. Ira. M. Sheskin, *How Jewish Communities Differ* (New York: North American Jewish Data Bank, 2001), 62.
- 31. Sheskin, *How Jewish Communities Differ*, 34; Smith, *Family Connections*, 108.
- 32. Sheskin, *How Jewish Communities Differ*, 57, 92.