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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# STREAMS:

# SMALL JEWISH COMMUNITIES ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Amy Hill Shevitz
Norman. Oklahoma
2002

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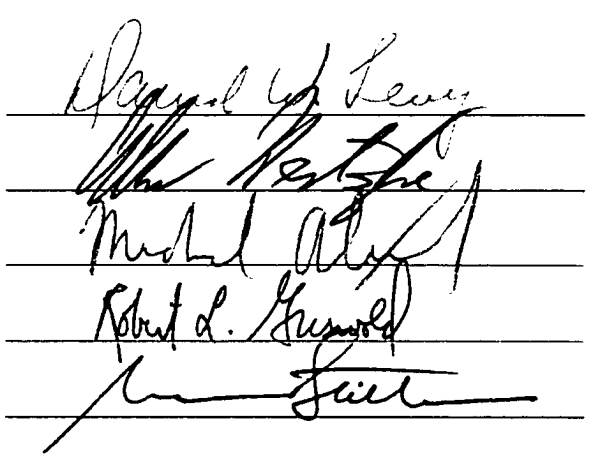
SMALL JEWISH COMMUNITIES ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY



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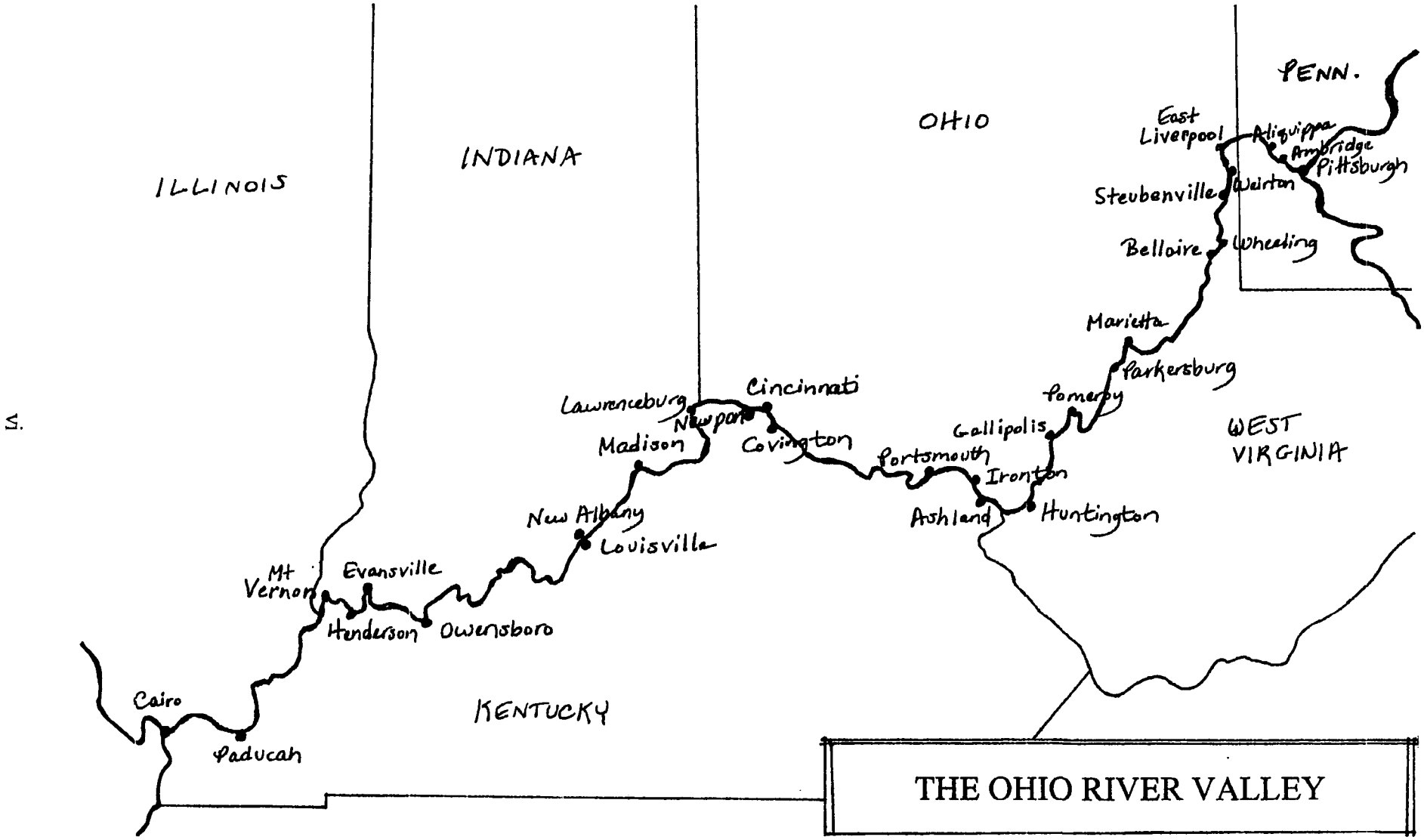


THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

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## PREFACE

In the spring of 1977, I went with some acquaintances to visit an old Jewish cemetery, tucked away on a hill beyond a side road in Marietta, Ohio, the town where I grew up and to which they had moved a few years earlier. There were only six gravestones, and the names on them ranged from the familiar (some family members in their 80s still lived in town) to the irretrievable – the stones were so worn that we could not make out the Hebrew inscriptions. I took the names of some of these Jews, with the dates of their deaths, to the public library, to see if I could find something about them from obituaries published in the local newspaper. There they were. From 1907: Morris Miller, the "aged Jew," who died when his junk-peddling wagon was hit by a train at a crossing just around the corner from my parents' home. From 1934: Harold Ginsburg, killed in an oil well explosion only three weeks after his wedding.

The context of these obituaries suggested the existence of a community now dissolved, its people dispersed. I was eventually able to recreate much of this

community's history and life, and the resulting article was published in 1979. Almost twenty years later, when I was back in graduate school studying American history, my original story of a small river town's Jewish past was still piquing interest, and I was asked to expand my local project to a regional one. Thus, Streams: Small Jewish Communities on the Banks of the Ohio became both a book project for the University Press of Kentucky's Ohio River Valley Series and my doctoral dissertation.

There are two aspects to this work, the demographic ("Small Jewish Communities") and the geographic ("on the Banks of the Ohio"). This is not just a study of small town Jews, but of Jews in specific small communities in a specific place across time. Twenty-four communities, scattered along the entire length of the Ohio, from the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers to the junction with the Mississippi, constituted the area of my research: Ambridge and Aliquippa, Pennsylvania; East Liverpool, Steubenville, Bellaire, Marietta, Gallipolis, Ironton, Pomeroy, and Portsmouth, Ohio; Weirton, Wheeling, Parkersburg, and Huntington, West Virginia; Ashland, Newport, Covington, Owensboro, Henderson, and Paducah, Kentucky; Madison, Evansville and Mt. Vernon, Indiana; and Cairo, Illinois. Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville are not subjects of this study in and of themselves, but are integral to it as regional Jewish centers.

There is a certain imprecision in the terms "city" and "small town." The U.S. government sets the definition of an urban place at 2,500, which is fairly useless. Studying both nineteenth- and twentieth-century urbanization, Sam Bass Warner, Jr., divided urban places into categories of "town" (2,500 to 24,999), "city" (25,000 to

249,999) and "metropolis" (250,000 and over). A New York Times article defined a "small town" as one with a population under 10,000; Time magazine used the benchmark of 5,000 to 20,000.[1]

There is also a subjective dimension to these definitions. Eric Monkkonen notes that the figure of 100,000 "probably corresponds more to our contemporary sense of what constitutes a 'real city,' a minimally sized metropolis." As the size of the biggest cities increases, perspectives change. What might seem like a thriving metropolis of 10,000 in 1840 would probably seem like a small town to most Americans even in 1940 and certainly in 2002. Also, for a highly urbanized group like American Jews, a place might seem small that is not so perceived by, for instance, white Protestants for whom there is already a critical mass of community. Half of the places I studied made it into Warner's city category – that is, a population over 25,000 – in the twentieth century, though several dropped below that figure in the later part of the century. Half remained in the category that Warner calls towns – from 2,500 to 25,000.[2]

My operating definition of small town, for purposes of this work, is a community that was not a major center of Jewish population. In only a few of the towns studied did

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[1] Warner, The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 70; Sam Roberts, "Yes, A Small Town is Different," New York Times, Sunday, August 27, 1995, Week in Review section; Eric Pooley, "The Great Escape," Time, December 8, 1997, 52-65. Lewis Atherton's classic study Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954) dealt with midwestern small towns generally under 5,000 population. Another study, Richard O. Davies' Main Street Blues: The Decline of Small Town America (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), examined an Ohio town where the peak population barely exceeded 2,000.

[2] Eric H. Monkkonen, America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 70. Monkonnen uses a four-tiered schema of villages, towns, cities, and metropolises, without pinning himself down to definitions by population size. For populations of the communities studied here, see the tables in the Appendix. The places that have recently dropped below "city" threshold are Portsmouth and Steubenville, Ohio, and Ashland and Newport, Kentucky. Pomeroy, Ohio, recently fell from "town" to "village" status. Only Evansville meets the criterion for city that Monkkonen suggests, that is, of at least 100,000 residents. Subjectively speaking, I consider that I grew up in a small town, though the City of Marietta, Ohio, had some 15-17,000 residents.

the Jewish population ever exceed 1,000, and only in Evansville did it remain above 1,000 for a significant length of time. On the other hand, this is not the story of Jews in towns with only one or two Jewish families. There were numerous towns on the Ohio where Jewish residents numbered two dozen or less; it is impossible to say what percentage of such isolated Jews affiliated with the nearest community, but we know that many did. The towns in my study are those in which the Jewish population rose, at some point, to a level where some communal organization could be attempted. This is a study of the life of communities.[3]

Given this focus, I was not primarily interested in the question of Jewish identity in small towns and address it only as an issue in adaptation. The nature of small-town Jewish identity, its differences from urban Jewishness, and its consequences ("is it good for the Jews?") have been examined by various rabbis and sociologists. Many fine memoirs have also – and perhaps more effectively – dealt with these concerns.[4]

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[3] For Jewish population estimates, see the tables in the Appendix.

[4] The literature on small-town Jews includes: Lee Levinger, "The Disappearing Small-Town Jew," Commentary 14:2 (August 1952), 157-63; Robert Shosteck, "Small-Town Jewry Tell Their [sic] Story: A Survey of B'nai B'rith Membership in Small Communities in the United States and Canada" (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Vocational Service Bureau, 1953), which is, ironically, a guide for young men considering moving to the very sorts of small towns for which Levinger wrote the obituary the previous year; Eugen Schoenfeld, "Small-Town Jews: A Study in Identity and Integration" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1967), which studies towns in southern Illinois; Peter Isaac Rose, "Strangers in their Midst: Small-Town Jews and Their Neighbors," in Rose, ed., The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America (New York: Random House, 1969); Frank Anthony Fear, "The Quest for Saliency: Patterns of Jewish Communal Organization in Three Small Appalachian Small Towns" (M.A. thesis, West Virginia University, 1972); Jerome David Paul, "Jewish Consciousness in the Small Town: A Sociological Study of Jewish Identification" (M.H.L./Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1974); Ewa Morawska, Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton Univ Press, 1996) about Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Memoirs include: Brenda Weisberg Meckler, Papa Was a Farmer (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1988), about Jewish farmers in southwest Ohio; Stella Suberman, The Jew Store: A Family Memoir (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998), about a store-keeping family in western Tennessee in the 1920s; Howard V. Epstein, ed., Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies (Santa Rosa, CA: Vision Books International, 1997), an anthology of short memoirs from around the country; and Julie Salamon's wonderful The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place (New York: Random House, 1996) about her childhood in tiny Seaman, in Adams County, Ohio. See also some of the stories in Ze'ev

Since this is a regional study, we must also address the question: how do we define region? Regionalism has been a central concept in American identity since the founding of the republic. However, the definition of a region cannot always be nailed down with precision. In an important study of regionalism, All Over the Map, Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf argue that "regions have *always* been complex and unstable constructions, generated by constantly evolving systems of government, economy, migration, event, and culture." Common interests and identity do not always neatly organize themselves by political geography; culture slips borders. They cite the trans-Appalachian West as a notable example of an ill-defined region whose geographic and cultural contours changed over time. They conclude, then, that "regionalism [is] a sense of common interest and identity across an extended, if indeterminate, space, a function of unpredictably changing circumstances."[5]

Given this definition, then, is the Ohio River Valley a coherent region? From early white settlement through the nineteenth century, there was a sense that the Ohio River Valley was a special place, particularly in terms of the development of American democracy. "There will be no rubbish to remove before you lay the foundations," wrote Manasseh Cutler in 1787 of the upcoming project of settling the Ohio River Valley; both geographically and morally, "the seat of [American] empire" would be on the Ohio. To

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Chafets, Members of the Tribe: On the Road in Jewish America (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), and Dan Rottenberg, ed., Middletown Jews: The Tenuous Survival of an American Jewish Community (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), a collection of oral histories from Muncie, Indiana. Hasia Diner cites more works about small-town Jewish merchants in A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 259, note 38.

[5] Edward L. Ayers, Peter S. Onuf, et al, All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4, 6. For the changing uses of regionalism, see essay by John L. Thomas in Stanley Kutler, ed., Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996), II: 7-73. For an excellent study of the development of regional consciousness (in this case, in western Washington state), see Katherine G. Morrisey, Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Frederick Jackson Turner, who tended to identify regions with sequential frontiers, the Ohio River Valley was the first place to manifest what he identified as "the Western point of view," an outlook that is capitalist, democratic, anti-aristocratic, anti-hierarchical, innovative, and individualist. The sense of having once been an important frontier still colors Ohio River Valley life. In Marietta, Ohio, which constantly advertises its role as the first permanent organized settlement in the Old Northwest Territory, the designation "Pioneer" is attached to everything: a savings banks, a bakery, a preschool, a Cadillac dealership.[6]

But this aspect does not, of course, exhaust the possibilities of regional identity. In a 1909 lecture, "The Ohio Valley in American History," Turner made a more useful observation: "The Ohio Valley is . . . not only a commercial highway, it is a middle kingdom between the East and the West, between the northern area, which was occupied by a greater New England and emigrants from northern Europe, and the southern area of the 'Cotton Kingdom.'" Turner was neither the first nor the last to observe that a variety of factors influenced the development of the Ohio River Valley, but the observation is critical. Not just market forces or the forces of nature (especially flooding) but the heritages of slave labor vs. free labor societies and of different forms of government organization have had an historical impact. So have the cultural forces of the Upper and

[6] "The Significance of the Section in American History," in History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 93-116. Quote from Cutler on 100. Turner was less interested in what happened within a section after its frontier era had passed than he was in an overall East-West rivalry. He believed that "sectional self-consciousness and sensitiveness is likely to be increased as time goes on and crystallized sections feel the full influence of their geographical peculiarities, their special interests, and their developed ideals, in a closed and static nation" (111).

the Deep South, coming from one direction, and Yankee immigrant influences coming from another.[7]

The Ohio River has always functioned as both a border and a seam. It has the unique characteristic of having been a politically charged border, between slave and free states. Reflecting geopolitical realities, river towns on the north bank participated in the creation of midwestern culture, being among those "communities of the Old Northwest [where] the birth of bourgeois society had been natural and inevitable." The Midwest, particularly its small towns, was **the** middle class frontier of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But if much of the Ohio Valley is midwestern, southern influences blunted its development into the sort of Yankee diaspora that much of the Midwest was.[8]

The Ohio River Valley is unique because of its past, its history as a cultural meeting ground. Is this adequate for regional definition? The attempt to delineate, describe, and understand regionalism can be greatly enhanced by the insights of geography and landscape studies, providing a more dynamic analysis.

Some scholars prefer to distinguish between region – an interdependent entity – and section – a "physiographic area," like the Ohio River Valley. The advantage of this distinction is greater precision, for a section can include several regions; for instance, we

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[7] Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962), 162.

[8] Andrew R.L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 126. See also Nicole Etcheson, The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), which argues that northern-southern tensions in this area, originally in conflict, eventually blended into a specific republican culture that was the ultimate origin of midwestern regional identity.

Aspects of cultural southernness have always been noticeable on the north bank of the Ohio, for instance in place names (William Coyle, "A Classification of Ohio Place Names," Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 60:3 [July 1951], 273-82) and architecture (Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, "Settlement and Selected Landscape Imprints in the Ohio Valley," in Robert L. Reid, ed., Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991], 67-104).

might identify both northern and southern regions in the section known as the Ohio River Valley. As one writer points out, "Despite their appealing spatial logic, physiographic areas typically cut across the man-made functional areas of city[-based] regions, thereby confusing the analysis of social change."[9]

A focus on physiography certainly does complicate analyses of social phenomena. But it is impossible to ignore factors of "spatial logic." Often the **sense** of place (including of regions) is best perceived in language about place, in descriptions of "the invisible landscape of communal association and usage," as opposed to maps and other "objective" criteria. But these constructions – the facts of social geography – cannot be divorced from the physical geographic facts. Experientially, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan makes clear, "place is whatever stable object catches our attention." Space becomes psychically organized as place through individual human perceptions and mental organization of these perceptions. Thus, "any large feature in the landscape creates its own world, which may expand or contract with the passing concerns of the people, but which does not completely lose its identity." Certain objects demand attention – and a large river is certainly one such feature.[10]

"Place" is essentially static: it becomes meaningful only through the ways in which it intersects with time over the course of an individual's and a community's life.

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[9] Edward Muller, "Metropolis and Region: A Framework for Enquiry into Western Pennsylvania," in Samuel P. Hays, ed., City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 182.

[10] Kent C. Ryden, Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 208; Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 161, 163. From the beginning of white experience in the Ohio Valley, the Ohio and its tributary rivers were "the most important landscape referents" in the minds of travelers (John Jakle, Images of the Ohio Valley: A Historical Geography of Travel, 1740-1860 [New York: Oxford University Press, 1977], 3).

"Identity of place," Tuan concludes, "is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life." It is local history, studies of individual communities, which can reify the abstract notions of "space" and "place."[11]

In the late 1980s, in a calculated attempt to resurrect a regional consciousness, a consortium of state humanities councils in the Ohio Valley embarked on a major project of public education about the river and the valley, history and culture. Interestingly, in the first publication to come from this project, entitled Always a River, the first three essays are landscape studies, legitimizing the identification of the Valley as a discrete region. But equally important to this project are studies of specific aspects of experience, whether in subsections of the region (as in Darrel Bigham's study of Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio) or in a common ethnic group throughout it (as in Joe William Trotter, Jr.,'s "River Jordan": African-American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley, 1790-1950). These studies enact a "definition of community in terms of place [that] lends itself to a holistic conception of community," in the words of one historian. "The community is physically delimited from the surrounding communities; it is one place. If, however, we think of community not simply as a place, but [also] as a set of relationships, then our sense of the community as one whole begins to change." It is in this sense that we

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[11] Tuan, Space and Place, 178. Kim Gruenwald has examined how, in the eighteenth-century Ohio Valley, place was created in "the evolving relationship between the settlers and the Ohio River and in the changing role the river played in the lives of each generation" ("Across the Mountains, the Western Country, the Buckeye State: The Evolution of the Ohio River's Role as a Boundary between North and South" [Paper delivered at the Ninety-First Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Indianapolis, Indiana, 5 April 1998], 2 [used by permission of author]). A contemporary dramatization of the identity of place is presented visually in Andrew Borowiec's book of photographs, Along the Ohio (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), though Borowiec tends to focus on the seamy underside of river life.

Also illustrative is John Berry's Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Berry's narrative is built around human actions with respect to the river: acting on the physical landscape (the engineering question: how do we prevent damaging floods?) and acting with and against other people (the resources question: whose interests are served, and whose are sacrificed, when political decisions are made about flood control?).

consider the Jews of the Ohio River Valley as local residents and localized Jewish communities, and as part of regional and even national networks.[12]

Regionalism is a concept that has been applied quite productively to American Jewish history in recent years. There has long been interest in the unique experience of Jews in the South, and there is a burgeoning literature on Jews in the West. At a more local level, two studies that served as early models are William Toll's 1982 work on Portland, Oregon, and Judith Endelman's 1984 work on Indianapolis. Two essays in Sander Gilman and Milton Shain's collection Jewries at the Frontier illustrate how the

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[12] Robert L. Reid, ed., Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Bigham's Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998) and Trotter's "River Jordan" (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998) are part of the Ohio River Valley Books series, to which the present study will soon be added. Observations on "community": Shelton Stromquist, "A Sense of Place: A Historian Advocates Conceptual Approaches to Community History," in Carol Kammen, ed., The Pursuit of Local History: Readings on Theory and Practice (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 186.

The question of differential local development within the Ohio River Valley is addressed in my narrative when relevant to the Jewish story. I cannot do more than allude to the more general question of why local areas developed differently, for instance, why some small centers grew into cities and some did not. Edward Muller has demonstrated with respect to the antebellum Mid-Ohio Valley that the "conditions and timing of regional development" and individual towns' responses created "distinct patterns of selective urban growth" ("Selective Urban Growth in the Middle Ohio Valley, 1800-1860," Geographical Review 66 [April 1976], 178-99). Michael Marchione's "Economic Development and Settlement Patterns in the Flood Plain of the Upper Ohio Valley" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1971) looks at regional development and local responses with respect to use of the Ohio and its tributaries.

Generally speaking, development in the lower Valley along the river was less intense than upriver for both geographic reasons (appropriateness of the land for agriculture, ease of access from the Ohio to the interior on smaller rivers) and chronological reasons (especially when rail transportation trumped the advantages of water transport). But nothing foreordained the courses of development that towns took. In particular, geography was not destiny: not only location, but natural resources, timing, luck and human foresight played a role. The sad history of Cairo, Illinois, is instructive: touted by early nineteenth-century speculators as a sure thing because of its location at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, the town succumbed to poor planning and even worse environmental conditions and never had even a chance to challenge St. Louis to be the Midwest's Mississippi River entrepot (Lois Carrier, Illinois: Crossroads of a Continent [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993], 102).

Timothy Mahoney has done exemplary work on regional development and local variation within the upper Mississippi River Valley. In River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), he studied the relation of economy and geography; in Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), he demonstrated how social structures were erected on that base.

conversation between ethnic group and region has played out in two of the more colorful American regions, Alaska and Texas. In all these cases, place is an integral part of Jewish identity.[13]

The Jewish experience and the regional experience reflected and even reinforced each other in the Ohio River Valley. For Jews, regional identity was particularly relevant in the mid-nineteenth century. The antebellum Ohio River Valley's meaning as a cradle of bourgeois America fit well with the middle-class aspirations and achievements of German Jewish immigrants. Jewish population and institutions proliferated in the Midwest at a much faster rate than in the older settlements of the Northeast, and the region was increasingly influential in American Judaism. Contemporaries thought that the nineteenth-century Cincinnati Jewish community had "a spirit all its own." The city

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[13] William Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry Over Four Generations (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982); Judith Endelman, The Jewish Community of Indianapolis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Both Toll and Endelman used social history methods to trace events in their cities and to compare these Jews to Jews elsewhere and to their fellow local citizens. Both studies illuminate general trends in American Jewish life (such as the importance of national organizations such as B'nai B'rith) and the effects of specific local phenomena (for instance, the physical configuration of Jewish communities, especially in relation to other ethnic groups). But in both cases, these are communities defined by political criteria, i.e., cities with definable borders (both city and larger metropolitan area). Perforce, communities thus defined have common interests, mooting the question of regional identity. Toll, however, does move beyond a single city to a regional perspective, coming to useful conclusions about Jewish identity in the American West, which have been very important to the further exploration of this unique Jewish subculture.

Seth Wolitz, "Bifocality in the Texas-Jewish Experience," in Sander Gilman and Milton Shain, eds., Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 185-208; Bernard Riesman, "Alaskan Jews Discover the Last Frontier," in Gilman and Shain, Jewries at the Frontier, 111-126.

Geographic theory is also making some headway in Jewish studies, as evidenced in a recent compilation, Harold Brodsky, ed., Land and Community: Geography in Jewish Studies (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1997). Most of the essays discuss the spatial distribution of Jews within regions such as cities and neighborhoods, especially the origins and shifts of residential concentration. In his essay, "Sanctifying Suburban Space" (257-86), Etan Diamond goes a further step toward geographic abstraction in his study of how Jewish neighborhoods (in his case, in Toronto) function conceptually as sacred space: sacred space includes the constructed environments in which the community operates, not just those areas, such as synagogues, which are explicitly designated as "holy." Diamond demonstrates the dynamics of geography in his analysis of the "portability of sacred space." He develops this further in his book And I Will Dwell in their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

was headquarters of the new American Judaism, and the small Jewish communities along the river participated avidly in the project of religious reform.[14]

The effects of chain migration and regional networks of associations enhanced Jewish regional consciousness. Jews in the small river communities were part of a larger economic, social, cultural and religious community that spanned the region; the patterns of Jewish interactions in the Valley expressed a sense of connectedness that clearly defined this as a community. For Jews, who need the contacts to maintain their Jewish lives, the Ohio River has acted more as a seam than as a border. Jews in East Liverpool and Steubenville, Ohio, keep in close touch with their relatives in Pittsburgh. Jews in Marietta cross to Parkersburg, West Virginia, to attend the Reform temple. Women raised in Ashland, Kentucky, live in Portsmouth, Ohio, with husbands who grew up there. A Jewish family sells its business in Henderson, Kentucky, and moves across the river to the big city of Evansville, Indiana. These intra-Valley, trans-river connections are at least as prominent in the lives of Valley towns as are connections with large Jewish population centers inland.

Jews also participated in the construction of regional identity. The Jewish merchant has long been a part of popular mythology in writings about the Ohio River Valley. Through their participation in the evolution of the small-town middle class, Jews in the nineteenth-century Ohio River Valley helped create a powerful model of American culture. Through the creation of Jewish religious, social and cultural institutions, they

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[14] Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience/Hebrew Union College, 1989), 1. The relative importance of the West Coast to American Judaism and the American Jewish community was also increasing; the South's was declining (Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 [New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994], 73-74).

also helped build American pluralism at the same time as they transformed Judaism into an American mode.[15]

Yet despite a similar dynamic of Jewish settlement in towns across the Ohio River Valley, different patterns of local development reflected specific economic and cultural characteristics and created a variety of local Jewish experiences. Population and economic growth were necessary, but not sufficient, for the development of organized Jewish communities. Alike in many ways, both growing steadily, Marietta and Portsmouth, Ohio, fostered very different Jewish experiences in the antebellum era. The boom-and-bust history of Madison, Indiana in the 1830s and 1840s was reflected in its Jewish life. The Jewish narrative of the Ohio River Valley includes the stories of German-Jewish immigrants in America, of American Reform Judaism, and of small-town American Jewish culture. All of these facets of the Jewish experience in the Ohio River Valley are exhibited within the context of Jewish community, and therefore I have paid most attention to the development of community and to the experiences of Jews in community.[16]

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[15] An example of the popular mythology is R. E. Banta's "benevolent old Jewish gentleman," the merchant whose Christian customers "had taught him that there were really places where most folks didn't care where he came from, if his word was good and his goods were sound" (The Ohio [New York: Rinehart, 1949], 279).

Donald Worster warns against the confusion of regional history with ethnic history: the fact that an immigrant group might cluster in a certain region does not necessarily mean that the group partakes of that region's uniqueness. "The ethnic group becomes central to the region's history," he argues, "when and where and to the extent it becomes altered by that region, or develops an active voice in defining the region's 'intractable diversity'" ("New West, True West: Interpreting the Region's History," in Richard W. Etulain, ed., Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional? [Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999], 95). Metropolitan New York is the most evident example of this interaction with respect to Jews: New York Jewish identity bears the traces of experience in the diverse, densely populated, competitive, and culturally vigorous and fluid environment of the gateway city, and in many ways Jewishness defines New York-ness. As Lenny Bruce said, if you live in New York, you're Jewish even if you're goyish.

[16] Trotter demonstrates the variety of experiences also among black communities within the Ohio Valley.

While exhibiting diverse themes, the cumulative experience of the small Jewish communities in the Ohio River Valley provides a unique viewpoint onto American Jewish history as a whole. These communities were important sites for the creation of American Jewish identity. Interacting with the culture of the Ohio River Valley, in a context of religious pluralism in the cradle of American bourgeois society, the small communities were critical to the development of American Reform Judaism. And as the American Jewish population, and American Jewish society and culture, changed over time, the Ohio River Valley continued to foster the integration of Jewish immigrants and to nurture new models of Jewish communal survival.

My work on this dissertation was supported in part by several sources: a Graduate Student Senate Research Grant and a Graduate College Student Research Presentation Award from the University of Oklahoma, the Loewenstein-Wiener Fellowship in American Jewish Studies from the American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and the Finkelstein Fellowship in Jewish Studies at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. Many, many individuals have been important resources for me on this project; many of their names appear in the footnotes.

Without a specific external motivation, I might not have undertaken this particular study in American Jewish history for my dissertation. But the start of this project was coincidental with my move from the East Coast to the West, and the questions I needed to address turned out to be extremely relevant to my immediate experience – how do Jews and Jewish communities differ in different parts of the country? Can we ascertain why? In addition to studying the Ohio River Valley, I also turned my attention to the

Jews of Oklahoma (the first phase of my cross-country journey) and then to the Jews of Southern California. My intellectual journeys have been enhanced and invigorated by my physical journeys.

I need to give special acknowledgement and thanks to several people who were particularly important to me while I was on this journey. First is my father, Dr. Robert S. Hill, who manned the scholarly home base in the Ohio River Valley. I had the outrageous good fortune to come to know Dr. David W. Levy during my sojourn in the Oklahoma "heartland"; he has been a remarkable teacher, an insightful and respectful advisor, and a constant friend (in spite of the birds). Finally, I must thank my husband, Rabbi Dan Shevitz, with whom I have travelled across the country from Boston to Los Angeles in these eleven years of our marriage, and with whom I look forward to many new adventures. In the immortal words of Baron Hugo: this is a great relationship.

## PROLOGUE: ON THE FRONTIER

On July 3, 1825, the small Jewish community of Cincinnati, Ohio, sent a fund-raising letter to the long-established congregation Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina. Appealing for financial assistance in "the erection of a House to worship the God of our forefathers," the Cincinnatians emphasized both their spiritual closeness to other American Jews, who were all "children of the same family and faith," and their physical distance, "separated as we are and scattered through the wilds of America . . . ." In Cincinnati, Jews had already begun arrangements for worship, kashrut and burial, but it was vital to secure the stability of communal institutions. "We are well assured," they noted, "that many Jews are lost in this country from not being in the neighbourhood of a congregation[;] they often marry with Christians, and their posterity lose the true worship of God for ever." The Charlestonians were being asked to contribute not only to the growth of Judaism but also to the growth of America. The only Jewish congregation in a five-hundred-mile radius, "we have always performed all in our power to promote

Judaism, and for the last four or five years, we have congregated, where a few years before nothing was heard, but the howling of wild Beasts, and the more hideous cry of savage man . . . ."[1]

More than merely a dramatic fundraising device, this letter clearly expresses the early Cincinnati community's consciousness of its pioneering role as Jews in America's first "West." The men who composed the letter had lived in cities, in Europe and in North America; their journeys down the Ohio River to Cincinnati, if no longer subject to the threat of Indian attack, were nonetheless long and rough. Cincinnati in 1825 was chronologically far beyond its beginnings as a military outpost, but it was still very far both geographically and psychically from New York and Philadelphia, with their old, wealthy, and secure Jewish populations and institutions. The Ohio River Valley in 1825 was still a **Jewish** frontier, and the Cincinnatians' letter conveys their sense of living on that frontier – on the edge, in a dangerous place where both body and soul were still potentially in peril.

The moment we use the term "America's first West," we are inevitably embroiled in historiographical debates about the nature of "the West" and "the frontier" in the United States. These debates have been primarily the province of scholars of the trans-Mississippi West, that is, the "classic" American West of Geronimo and Buffalo Bill. However, the issues pertain equally to more eastern Wests, like the frontier inhabited by Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. In fact, questions of defining the frontier apply, arguably, most directly to the midwestern West, for Frederick Jackson Turner developed

[1] Representatives of the Hebrew Congregation in Cincinnati to The Elders of the Jewish Congregation at Charleston, South Carolina, July 3, 1825, Bertram W. Korn Collection, American Jewish Archives (AJA), Hebrew-Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

his famous frontier thesis on the basis of his experience as a midwesterner. Though no longer treated as gospel, Turner's thesis still maps the territory and sets the parameters for current thinking about the nature of the frontier.[2]

Turner's 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" defined the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization." Civilization is an inevitable evolutionary process whereby society develops from a simple to a more complex state, of necessity expanding across the landscape. The frontier is a "meeting point" at "the outer edge of the wave" of ever-expanding civilization. In America, this wave of civilization "has followed the arteries made by geology" (such as rivers and mountain passes) until "the wilderness has been interpenetrated by lines of civilization."[3]

Turner gave the existing definition of frontier a new twist, which he considered more appropriate to the American setting. In the original European usage, a frontier was simply a border between two peoples or lands, for instance, between France and Germany. In Turner's vision of America, it became the border between something and nothing, between complex social organization and "free land." The evolutionary model implied a neat sequence of events, layers of activities moving into an area, which cumulate to "civilization." Thus it was to be expected that at some point the frontier

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[2] Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 125-26. See section about the Midwest in "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Frederick Jackson Turner, History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 80.

[3] Turner, History, Frontier, and Section, 59-91. Quotes are on 60, 69.

would "close." As settlement reached a critical density, there was no longer anything against which the line of civilization could advance further.[4]

Modern scholars find that this model does not resonate with what they have learned about the experiences of Americans who actually participated in events. Since the 1960s, historians have worked on developing a new understanding, wherein the frontier is perceived, in one 1981 definition, "not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies." This model of intercultural contact recognizes that there **is** something on both sides of a border. Unlike Turner's unitary vision of civilization, the new definition recognizes both conquest and assimilation, and it acknowledges the experiences of many peoples. In its critique of "progress" (which to Turner was the essence of the frontier movement) it is more ambiguous about how the frontier "opens" and how it "closes."[5]

Studies of the Ohio River Valley have contributed to this new understanding of frontiers. Eric Hinderaker's descriptions of the "interdependent and interpenetrated world" of British, French and Indian in the eighteenth-century Valley, and of the subsequent conflicts which resulted in British hegemony, illustrate the dynamic nature of a frontier borderland in all its messiness. Stephen Aron's work on eighteenth-century Kentucky argues that salient aspects of that early borderland interaction -- the destruction of any "middle ground" between whites and Indians, unequal distribution of land, and the failure to establish agrarian democracy – prefigured the the pattern for colonization of the

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[4] Gregory H. Nobles, American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Cultural Conquest (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 6; Turner, History, Frontier, and Section, 59, 88.

[5] Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Frontier," in Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg, eds., A Companion to American Thought (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 255-59. Quote from Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson (1981) is on 257.

rest of the continent, that is, of successive "Wests." Rather than seeing the frontier as an extension of east coast American civilization, as did Turner, Hinderaker and Aron emphasize how the Ohio River Valley was a borderland only gradually incorporated into an expanding metropolitan orbit.[6]

The trans-Appalachian West, both before and after the Revolution, figures prominently in Gregory Nobles' work, which defines frontier as "a region in which no culture, group, or government can claim effective control or hegemony over others." The struggle for control appeared in different regions at different times: between English and Indians in seventeenth-century Massachusetts; among British, French, and Americans in the trans-Appalachian West in the eighteenth century; between Mexicans and Americans in Texas in the early nineteenth century; between Americans and Indians west of the Rockies in the later nineteenth century.[7]

Nobles argues that the frontier is neither "a place, [nor] even a frequently repeated, one-dimensional process of contact, settlement and development. It involves, rather, a much more complex process of mutual exchange." Nobles notes how the issues raised by intercultural contact persist, adducing the example of current conflicts over Indian casinos in New England. The Pequot Indians, decimated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but no longer invisible, mount a challenge to white control as they

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[6] Eric Hinderaker, Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) (quote is on 45); Stephen Aron, How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[7] Gregory Nobles, American Frontiers, xii. Nobles has a helpful bibliographical essay on the response to Turner and the new western historiography (251-55).

build and control huge gambling establishments in Massachusetts and Connecticut, not a "true" frontier for some two hundred years.[8]

Elizabeth Perkins takes a different tack by looking not at external events, but by delving into the psychic world of white settlers living in the Ohio River Valley during the Revolutionary era. Using geography and landscape theory as investigative tools with which to analyze the way settlers spoke about their experiences, she found that they did not see themselves as being the periphery to a center. Their cognitive maps utilized metaphors of "in" and "out," and once they had moved into the West, they saw their settlement as being "in" American society, a society they superimposed onto a specific area of land. Despite their physical proximity, the settlers defined the Indians as "out" of society, giving evidence of their understanding of themselves as occupiers. It was later generations who, by ignoring the Indian presence both in fact and in white settlers' imaginations, could make expansion a story of inevitable movement rather than of slow accretion of population and gradual incorporation into an ever larger American orbit.[9]

For humans, space becomes place through our relationships with others; "landscape is [our] personal history made visible." The frontier, then, is a place **and** a process of encounter, where individuals and groups cross into the physical space inhabited by others, inducing in both sides the adjustment of psychic space. Once one crosses the threshold of prior settlement and prior experience, new constructions of place, as "an organized world of meaning," immediately begin. As a process, "frontier"

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[8] Nobles, American Frontiers, quote on 12; 248-50.

[9] Elizabeth Perkins, Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

crucially encompasses liminality, whether or not (or more or less) consciously understood through experience.[10]

In expansive terms, then, a "West," a "frontier" can exist on many levels. There is a vitality to the concept, when interpreted in terms of physical and cognitive geography, that encompasses many cultural phenomena. And there is every reason to think that the sense of being on/in the frontier can differ for different populations. The landscape certainly holds one meaning for the farmer and one for the hunter -- and yet another for the merchant.

The landscape also can hold one meaning for first-generation settlers and another for their successors. As Kim Gruenwald has shown, by 1830, the Ohio River Valley was no longer a frontier, a borderland for American whites; they were securely integrated into the national metropolitan orbit physically, socially, economically, and culturally. But others still had a sense of liminality. Joe William Trotter describes how for African Americans, the Ohio River was a powerful symbol of their continuing encounter with the white Other, of their incomplete integration into America. The river "not only represented the boundary between slavery and freedom during the antebellum era, but the division between the Jim Crow South and the urban North during the industrial age." Crossing the river symbolized a literal journey to freedom before the Civil War; in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it represented an economic, cultural, and psychic journey from peasant agriculture in the South to modernity in the North. The juxtaposition of freedom and oppression represented by these spaces was a powerful

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[10] Definition of "place" from Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1977), 179; second quote, 157.

context for the creation of nurturing African-American communities in the Ohio River Valley.[11]

Likewise, the Ohio River Valley was a Jewish frontier -- a borderland -- long after it ceased to be a national frontier. It was a place where Jews lived between the organized Jewish society of the Atlantic coast cities and the fearful (or delightful, depending on predilection) state of *galut*, exile from the Jewish people. In the Valley's cities, Jews experienced their own frontier of Jewish-Gentile contact; through participation in the market and in the civic life of the Ohio River Valley cities and towns, they organized their personal landscape into a place they could call home.[12]

Jacob Marcus applied the Turnerian thesis to Jews in the final pages of his lengthy work, The Colonial American Jew. Most relevant to Marcus was Turner's argument that it was the frontier, through the cultivation of democracy, which had created that new man which was the American. Likewise, Marcus argued, it created a new Jew. "The Jew *was* different here," he wrote. "He had left the 'ghetto' to become a pioneer on the American 'frontier' . . . . If to be a frontiersman is to be a man who dares to hazard, then the Jews as a whole are America's urban frontiersmen par excellence . . . . Here he could be an individual. With opportunity and achievement and the regard of others came self-respect and dignity."[13]

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[11] Kim Gruenwald, "Across the Mountains, the Western Country, the Buckeye State: The Evolution of the Ohio River's Role as a Boundary between North and South" (Paper delivered at the Ninety-First Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Indianapolis, Indiana, 5 April 1998); Joe William Trotter, Jr., "River Jordan": African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), xiii.

[12] Trotter (River Jordan, 3-7) describes how market development, urbanization, and industrial expansion were also central to the inclusion of African Americans (up to a certain point).

[13] Jacob Rader Marcus, The Colonial American Jew (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 3: 1338-40. The Turnerian analysis is not the only old-fashioned thing about this passage. Marcus was born

Though framing the issue in outdated terms, Marcus understood the basic dynamic of encounter as it could affect Jews. Recently, Sander Gilman has gone further in suggesting an influence of the frontier on Jews, not only (or even especially) in the United States, on a deeper existential level. Following the contemporary understanding of how humans construct space, Gilman employs the post-modern terminology of literary criticism: the frontier is "a constructed, psychological space" which "seems to be inscribed on the land but is actually a narrative tradition superimposed on a landscape." Throughout history, Gilman points out, Jews have been in perpetual encounter with other peoples, creating diverse models of accommodation and conflict – thus the evident appropriateness of the frontier model.[14]

Gilman's main concern is with using the frontier model, in its positive ramifications, as a replacement for the traditional center-periphery model of Jewish existence in which authenticity is a function of relationship to the Land of Israel. Historic Jewish experience (especially in places like medieval Muslim Spain and the modern United States) has continually defied the power of this model. But Gilman is also uncomfortable with a re-centering interpretation that makes marginality in and of itself the hallmark of Jewish identity. There is no pure experience at a center or at a periphery; humans inhabit a "liminal space [where] all parties are forced to understand and define

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in the United States in 1896; his statements about the transformation of Jewish identity in America bear the traces of nineteenth-century Jewish defensiveness about the self-respect presumed to be lacking in pre-modern European Jews.

[14] Sander L. Gilman, "Introduction: The Frontier as a Model for Jewish History," in Gilman and Milton Shain, eds., Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1-25. Quotes are on 20, 21.

themselves in the light of their experience of the Other." Thus, "it is at the real and at the imagined frontier that the shaping of Jewish identity does take place."[15]

When we look at Jews in terms of American frontiers, we bring the reality of the frontier encounter (the process of social and political change through contact) into harmony with the ideation of the frontier encounter (the process of new identity formation through contact). In the nineteenth century, the Ohio River Valley was a Jewish frontier both structurally/sociologically and psychologically, an important locus for the creation of American Jewish identity. In the small towns of the Ohio Valley, European Jewish immigrants became American business-people, American bourgeois, American citizens. They created a uniquely American Judaism in the crucible of intra-communal conflict and in conversation with American Christians. As regional self-understanding shifted in synchrony with social and economic transformations, the Jews of the Ohio River Valley found themselves on another frontier of American Jewish life, the twentieth-century small town.

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[15] Gilman. Jewries at the Frontier. 15. 14. The essays in the collection deal with both historical and contemporary frontiers. though there is a particular focus on South Africa as a "frontier for the construction of Jewish identity" (6). There are two essays about the United States. Bernard Reisman's piece on Alaska (111-26) is contemporary and sociological. Seth Wolitz writes about Texas Jews in both historical and contemporary contexts (185-208).

## CHAPTER ONE: THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY FROM WHITE EXPLORATION TO 1830

> The Ohio River from fifty miles above Muskingum to Scioto is most beautiful . . . . This country may, from a proper knowledge, be affirmed to be the most healthy, the most pleasant, the most commodious and most fertile spot of earth known to European people.[1]

This was the promise of the Ohio Valley as one white man, expressing the hopes of many other white men and women, put it. For the European colonial powers in North America, the Ohio Valley was a land full of potential for profits from fur-trapping and trading with the Indian nations. For the new United States of America, it was the first "West" – the first of many national frontiers inhabited by European Americans as they moved across the continent from the eastern seaboard. The Ohio River played a central role in this first frontier drama, for the movement of white American settlers along the Ohio "laid the basis of the occupation of the continent to the Mississippi River and even

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[1] Capt. Harry Gordon of the British Army's Western Department in Pennsylvania, 1766, quoted in Walter Havighurst, River to the West: Three Centuries of the Ohio (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 20.

beyond." Both north and south of the river, the Ohio Valley was the repository of Europeans' and Americans' earliest imperial hopes and the laboratory for their imperial policies.[2]

For the Turnerian historians, the frontier drama was acted out in terms of providence and progress. In 1906, Archer Butler Hulbert described the Ohio River as the "strategic course of empire to the heart of the continent." R. E. Banta's boosterish book, The Ohio (1949), applauded both westward "progress" and the cultural assimilation (read: Anglo-conformity) that he thought accompanied it. To Banta, the Ohio River system was "the heart of the nation," not simply in the sense of a geographic and/or commercial center, but as home to the idealized, average – and most authentic – American. John Barnhart entitled his 1953 work Valley of Democracy, arguing that the trans-Appalachian West was the site of a quintessentially American contest between "the aristocracy of the seacoast and the yeomanry of the back country," in which the "democratic masses" freed themselves from tyranny.[3]

The reality was much more complicated. In recent years, scholars have looked at the trans-Appalachian West – the first West – as it was transformed from a frontier (or, more precisely, a borderland) to an integral part of the United States. This transformation

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[2] Malcolm J. Rohrbough, The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies and Institutions, 1775-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17; Eric Hinderaker, Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xxiii.

[3] Archer Butler Hulbert, The Ohio River: A Course of Empire (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1906), 2; R. E. Banta, The Ohio (New York: Rinehart, 1949), 38; John D. Barnhart, Valley of Democracy: The Frontier versus the Plantation in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), 19, 217. An earlier statement of Barnhart's thesis is Beverley W. Bond, Jr., The Civilization of the Old Northwest: A Study of Political, Social, and Economic Development, 1788-1812 (New York: Macmillan, 1934). R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950) is another Turnerian work. Havighurst's River to the West is a lively narrative that is only implicitly Turnerian. An almost novelistic treatment of the period from 1768 (Treaty of Fort Stanwix) through 1795 is Allan W. Eckert's That Dark and Bloody River: Chronicles of the Ohio River Valley (New York: Bantam, 1996).

had cultural, political and economic components. The years between the earliest European settlement and the early national period saw the decline of Indian population and culture after a period of contact and cultural interpenetration, the triumph of the idea that white male property ownership was central to republican liberty, and a comprehensive shift from a hunting economy to agriculture and commerce. By 1830, the Ohio River Valley no longer seemed like a frontier to most white Americans. But for Jews in America, it was just coming into its own as a Jewish frontier.

The earliest white penetration of the Ohio River Valley came from several directions. The French were interested primarily in the trade potential of North America, especially the inland fur trade. Coming into the valley from the north, they explored the inland waterways between the Great Lakes and the Ohio in the 1670s and 1680s. By about 1700, they had settled along the Mississippi in southern Illinois and along the Wabash in Indiana, using these settlements as way-stations for river traffic between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico. The French could not recruit many settlers for their Illinois and Indiana territory, so agricultural development failed, while trading prospered. In 1749, in an attempt to secure its North American position, France formally claimed the Ohio River, but it was not a focus either for their trade or settlement.[4]

During the same period, British traders also moved into the valley, also mainly from the north. These traders were backed by merchants based in Virginia and

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[4] Andrew R. L. Cayton, Frontier Indiana (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 43-44; Lois Carrier, Illinois: Crossroads of a Continent (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 11-30; Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 80; George W. Knepper, Ohio and Its People (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989), 24-46. On the North American fur trade, see Murray Lawson, Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1943); Wayne E. Stevens, The Northwest Fur Trade, 1763-1800 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1928); Paul C. Phillips, The Fur Trade (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

Pennsylvania (including Jewish merchants in Philadelphia to be discussed in Chapter Two). The charters of some seaboard colonies, such as Virginia, provided them with sea-to-sea land claims; the colonies exercised these "rights" by moves westward. For example, in 1748, Virginia chartered the Ohio Company of Virginia that planned to develop a settlement at the strategically significant Forks of the Ohio, where the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers flow together to create the Ohio (now the site of Pittsburgh). Conflict with Pennsylvania's assertion of its claim to the area aborted this plan, but British trading still concentrated at this important site, and in 1754, a British trader built a post there. That same year, alarmed by the British incursions into the Ohio Valley, the French captured the post at the Forks, building Fort Duquesne there.

The Ohio Valley's Indians were a third party in the contest for control of the region. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian nations were also on the move. The Iroquois and other northern and eastern tribes had entered the valley, both north and south of the river, in the early 1600s, pushing out the small resident population, but not establishing permanent settlements until the early 1700s.[5]

So by the early 1750s, the Ohio River Valley was an "interdependent and interpenetrated world" of French, British and Native American activity, a world in which commerce along the linked waterways anchored by the Ohio created "networks of linked communities." The imperial struggle of the Seven Years' War – called in the American colonies the French and Indian War – decisively changed the profile of the Ohio River Valley, creating the conditions for massive white settlement. Most significantly, France lost its North American claims to the British in the Treaty of Paris, which ended the war

[5] Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 1-23; Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, A New History of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 5-14.

in 1763. Great Britain was, in theory at least, now free to take control in the trans-Appalachian west. This was not easily accomplished in the Ohio Valley. Although the British had recaptured Fort Duquesne in 1758 (renaming it Fort Pitt), Indian resistance hindered the actual physical takeover of most of the valley.[6]

In order to minimize this antagonism (among other purposes), British authorities tried to limit severely white settlement in the trans-Appalachian west through the provisions of the Proclamation of 1763. In addition, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 restricted whites to lands south of the Ohio River, in what is now western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The Indians continued to resist British military occupation. In the westernmost reaches of the Ohio Valley, resistance was the greatest; in the 1770's, the British abandoned many forts "in virtual headlong flight from the Indiana and Illinois Country." But the Indian position in the upper Ohio Valley was already weak, and the pressure of white settlement was great; migration flowed across Pennsylvania, and spilled down the Ohio from Fort Pitt. In 1773, a British general remarked on "the growing 'spirit of emigration'" impelling more and more whites downriver, despite legal prohibitions and physical dangers.[7]

Also in the 1760s and 1770s, an even larger population movement was developing from south of the Ohio River. Virginians leaving the Tidewater came through the Shenandoah Valley and the Blue Ridge Mountains into the trans-Appalachian counties of Virginia. In the 1760s, Kentucky was a favorite arena for hunters (such as the

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[6] Harrison and Klotter, New History of Kentucky, 16; Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 39, 45 (quote); Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 26-27.

[7] Quote re British occupation: Cayton, Frontier Indiana, 43. Quote re emigration: Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 174. Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 34-35. The British also pulled out of Fort Pitt in 1772; Virginia took the opportunity to occupy it and assert its hitherto-frustrated claim to the Forks of the Ohio.

legendary Daniel Boone) who came up from Virginia through the Cumberland Gap to hunt in the rich forests. In the 1770s, a few whites also began to settle there. The Fort Stanwix Treaty notwithstanding, Indian-white conflicts increased south of the Ohio. The Indians were unwilling to interpret the treaty to mean that they had given up all rights, including traditional hunting rights, on the southern bank, and it became evident to whites that achieving European domination required the forcible eviction of the Indians. Western Virginia and Kentucky County were thus secured after the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1774 pushed the Indians north of the river.[8]

The process of white settlement thereafter was rather uncontrolled. Virginia had issued land warrants to its French and Indian War veterans, setting off a speculative boom in western Virginia lands. Much of the mountainous terrain available under the warrants was difficult to traverse – much less to farm – and claims were often staked without an actual physical presence. Chaos ruled as conflicting legal claims conflicted even further with "squatters' rights," for often the one who could settle and stay put ended up with the land. Similarly, in 1774, white surveyors and explorers moved into Kentucky to claim land and organize settlements, in what one historian has called "the privately sponsored occupation of Kentucky." In 1776, the Virginia legislature formalized its western claim by creating the County of Kentucky.[9]

To complicate matters, some white squatters, in defiance of Indian reprisals and British military policy, had also settled on the north bank of the Ohio. Thus, on the eve

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[8] Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, West Virginia: A History, 2nd ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 14-16; Harrison and Klotter, A New History of Kentucky, 5-14; John Alexander Williams, West Virginia: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 17.

[9] Williams, West Virginia, 4-17; Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 199; Harrison and Klotter, New History of Kentucky, 24-32.

of the Revolution, European Americans were settled throughout the Ohio River Valley alongside remaining Indian communities, and the situation was highly unstable. The Revolution cleared up some problems but created others.[10]

In European America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Eric Hinderaker has demonstrated, "three distinct models of empire competed for acceptance." Both the French and the British envisioned an "empire of commerce," based on trade with the native peoples, and an "empire of land," concerned with direct exploitation of the region's natural resources. During the American Revolution, yet another model of empire was born **in** the Ohio River Valley and **of** its experience: an "empire of liberty," which supported the new American nationalism by providing an arena for the expansive economic opportunity deemed necessary for the fulfillment of true liberty. In the minds of the trans-Appalachian settlers, "[f]reedom from oppression [by Great Britain] easily merged with the freedom to pursue their desire for western lands without restraint."[11]

Not surprisingly, then, the end of the Revolution and the acquisition of the trans-Appalachian West by the new United States propelled even more waves of settlers into the Ohio Valley. Operating under the Articles of Confederation, Congress established forts along the river, such as Fort Harmar, at the Ohio and Muskingum, in 1785 and Fort Steuben, about fifty miles west of Fort Pitt, in 1786. Intended primarily as bulwarks against the lingering British military threat, this network of forts encouraged migration by

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[10] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 179, 204.

[11] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, xi, xiv, 200-201. He uses this as an example of Gordon Wood's thesis that a new concept of sovereignty was developing at this time, that is, the notion that sovereignty comes from below rather than above. (The phrase "empire of liberty" is Jefferson's.) Rohrbough (Trans-Appalachian Frontier, xvi) frankly asserts that western settlers were less concerned with democracy than with the acquisition and protection of property. See also Cayton, Frontier Indiana, 79-80: "In large part, it was this desire for the absolute independence they thought property offered them that motivated many Virginians to take up arms against the British and to migrate to the west, to the Ohio Valley, to Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and eventually Indiana."

making it seem safer. In Kentucky, white population exploded. Most came up through the mountains from Virginia and North Carolina via the Wilderness Road; but many, especially those from Pennsylvania, came down the Ohio. In the spring of 1788, 308 flatboats passed Fort Harmar carrying some 6,000 settlers, 3,000 head of livestock, and 150 wagons.[12]

The law by which Virginia had controlled Kentucky since 1776 included a provision for its eventual independence, and when in 1792, conditions were fulfilled for statehood, Virginia was glad to be rid of it. Virginia had included Kentucky land in its program of land warrants awarded to Revolutionary War veterans, which sparked another wave of land speculation, and it was impossible to control the situation from the east. Straightening out the land ownership situation was an important early task of Kentucky's new state government.[13]

There was no such correction, though, in the remaining trans-Appalachian counties of western Virginia, those that later formed the state of West Virginia. The welter of land speculation, absentee ownership, and conflicting claims led to such insecurity about land titles and availability that prospective settlers were loath to take risks there. Far from stimulating growth, land speculation –and speculators' lack of interest in improving their holdings – was a serious drag on western Virginia's early development.[14]

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[12] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 224; Darrel E. Bigham, "River of Opportunity: Economic Consequences of the Ohio" in Robert L. Reid, ed., Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 135.

[13] Harrison and Klotter, New History of Kentucky, 60, 68-69.

[14] Rice and Brown, West Virginia, 55-56.

A different dynamic was at work north of the Ohio. In 1780, the Continental Congress had resolved that states with western claims based on sea-to-sea colonial charters should cede these claims to the new nation, "'to be disposed of for the common benefit of the United States, and be settled and formed into distinct republican States.'" Between 1780 and 1786, all of these states agreed to make the cessions. (In return for ceding claims to territory north of the Ohio, Virginia was granted a large section between the Scioto and Miami rivers, the Virginia Military District, for the satisfaction of remaining veterans' land warrants.)[15]

The new United States government intended to proceed deliberately with settlement of the rest of the trans-Appalachian West. After the chaos of Kentucky settlement, national leaders realized the importance of orderly systems of land distribution. In 1784, Congress had come up with a plan for organizing the territory north of the Ohio River and providing for its eventual division into new states. A revised formalized plan, the Northwest Ordinance, was passed by Congress in July 1787. It was the first of many national plans for land distribution; remaining Indian claims were to be extinguished by treaty and/or force. But the plan was not merely a device for doling out land. It was also a project necessary for the United States government to establish control over the West as part of establishing national sovereignty. As Peter Onuf has pointed out, "[t]he Ordinance is more than a blueprint for continental expansion. Drafted at a time of [north-south] sectional division and constitutional crisis [in framing the new

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[15] Quoted in Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 47.

government], it also embodies a vision of a more harmonious, powerful, prosperous and expanding union."[16]

Plans for the Northwest Territory constituted a kind of imperial system, though one which viewed the subject regions not as colonies, but as incipient states. The Ordinance of 1787 provided an interim governmental structure as the region developed from territories into new states, which were to be "on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever." The plan gave a clear view of future expectations; with the federal army protecting the process, the promise of stability would encourage white settlement even further. The Northwest Ordinance did what no pre-Revolutionary power could do: it "created a flexible, dynamic mechanism for settling Euroamericans on Ohio Valley lands." Intended to strengthen the structure of a strong national government, the Ordinance also adumbrated an ethos for American society within that structure. It provided for freedom of worship, right of trial by jury, public support of education, and the abolition of slavery. American society in the Northwest Territory would be free, egalitarian, ambitious and religiously tolerant – a fact not overlooked by Jews in both the United States and Europe.[17]

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[16] Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 64-65; Stephen Aron, How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 80; Peter S. Onuf, Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), xiii (quote), 33-35. See also Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 3-6, 9: "[T]o many development-minded Americans in the 1780s, properly regulated commercial exchange was the best means for cementing the union and thus of guaranteeing the survival of an extended republic." Cayton (Frontier Indiana, 99) points out that the United States was successful in the Northwest Territory primarily because of the timing of its entry into the power contests in the region: "Precisely because the Old Northwest was a frontier, precisely because there was a fairly balanced contest among the peoples of the region [there was a] vacuum of power [which] left an opening that officials of the United States seized and exploited . . . ."

[17] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 236.

Under a preliminary law, the Land Ordinance of 1785, Congress had authorized a plan for surveying and distributing Northwest Territory land. The first area surveyed was around Fort Steuben, the so-called Seven Ranges, but land sales there were slow. In 1787, the Federal government sold several large tracts of land in Ohio territory, to a Massachusetts syndicate called the Ohio Company of Associates, to the eastern-controlled Scioto Company, and to Jonathan Symmes of New Jersey.[18]

The Ohio Company of Associates was organized in Boston in 1786 in anticipation of this disbursement. When the Northwest Ordinance was enacted, members of the Ohio Company wasted no time, setting out from Ipswich, Massachusetts, north of Boston, in December 1787 to claim the public lands they had purchased. The pioneers went overland to western Pennsylvania, where they set off down the Ohio River. On April 7, 1788, they disembarked at the confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers, where they established the town of Marietta on the northeast bank opposite Fort Harmar. As the first permanent organized settlement in the Northwest Territory, Marietta was the center of the first local government under the Northwest Ordinance.

The Symmes (or Miami) Purchase was the second area settled, farther west at the confluence of the Ohio and Miami rivers. In contrast to Marietta's example, and contrary to the intention of the Ordinance, it was settled in a thoroughly unsystematic fashion. In 1788, the town of Losantiville was established on the Ohio River, reinforced by Fort Washington in 1789, and renamed Cincinnati in 1790. The Ordinance's intentions also failed in the hands of the Scioto Company, which arranged to purchase land just west of

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[18] Large-scale speculations failed because too much land was available at once. Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 248.

the Ohio Company lands in south-central Ohio, but which fell victim to the financial shenanigans of its agent before title could be secured.[19]

"The Ohio Valley emerged from the Revolutionary era a distinctive region," Hinderaker states, "united within itself by the powerful experiences of the war years and connected with the United States at large by ties of military and economic dependency." In the early national era, Ohio Valley whites used this military leverage to rid themselves of the remaining Indian challenge. In 1795, the Treaty of Greenville, following an American victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, extinguished all Indian claims to eastern, southern and central Ohio and eastern Indiana.[20]

Farther west, Indiana and Illinois territories had come under American control during the Revolution, still bearing many traces of French cultural influence. White settlement there was sparse until the War of 1812 definitively ended Indian resistance in the region. Then a trickle of migration from the upland south – Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky – became a flood. The migrants, small-scale farmers, came across or down the Ohio River, disembarking in Indiana and Illinois river towns and continuing to interior lands. (Typical of this migration was the family of Tom Lincoln: his son Abraham was born in Kentucky, grew up in Indiana, and then moved to Illinois.) In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Shawneetown, Illinois, with a federal land office, was the most important center on the Ohio River between Louisville and St. Louis.[21]

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[19] Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 66-69.

[20] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 260.

[21] James H. Madison, The Indiana Way: A State History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 46, 60; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 357.

But even as citizens of the United States settled the Ohio River Valley, tying it into the network of the older states, the colonial history of the region determined the preconditions for differential development within the valley. French and British concepts of empire had the same goals, but critical differences emerged in modes of land distribution and political control, military strategy, and population pressures. The trans-Appalachian frontier's cultural typology derived from historical circumstances, "in response to different social, political, and economic opportunities and imperatives," and adumbrated enduring intra-regional differences.[22]

The interests of the Commonwealth of Virginia determined the developmental path of the region south of the Ohio. Even before statehood, Kentucky, because of its distance from the seat of Virginia state government, was very independent. It was certainly less tied to the national government than those areas on the north side of the Ohio that were directly supervised by the federal government via the Northwest Ordinance. Kentucky's population was also more homogeneous, Anglo and Protestant, than was the north bank's. Land speculation left a residue of vast economic and social inequality. Much of Kentucky land was owned by non-residents; in 1792, two-thirds of adult white male residents did not own land. It took years for the new state government to equalize the situation somewhat.[23]

The western Virginia counties remained a backwater, a colony of Virginia. Considering the physical obstacles and confusion about land ownership, Virginia's

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[22] Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 132-33; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 5.

[23] Harrison and Klotter, A New History of Kentucky, 55, 60, 68-69; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 52. Barnhart (Valley of Democracy, 90, 105) ascribes to frontier Kentucky an "unusually radical form of democracy," over-simplifying the coastal/uplands distinction.

government was not interested in developing transmontane routes to the West. Absentee landowners in Richmond, Baltimore, and Philadelphia were more interested in the appreciation of their assets than in creating communities. As with Kentucky, the structure of Virginia government contributed to western Virginia's isolation. Though constitutionally, the state government was highly centralized, in practice it was run at the local level by local oligarchies. Political interests focused on narrow local matters, with little communication and cooperation between mountains and tidewater. The self-perpetuating elites stifled creative initiatives, an approach that laid a basis for the eventual creation of the region's "tributary economy."[24]

Part of the Northwest Territory, southern Indiana and Illinois were also affected by their southern inheritances. The Ohio River was critical to white settlement there, but few settlers remained on the river permanently. Southern Indiana, unlike southern Ohio, had few navigable streams that went inland from the Ohio River for more than 40 miles. On the other hand, it had excellent agricultural land, so most of southern Indiana was devoted to farms. These geographic factors combined with settlers' cultural preferences. Southern migrants, they were "backwoods" families, who preferred the familiarity of subsistence life in the woods to urban life or market farming. These settlers were more

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[24] Williams, West Virginia, 23-29. Unique geopolitical factors affected western Virginia's development. In the colonial and Revolutionary eras, there were four important east-west transportation corridors linking the north-south corridor of the Atlantic coast to the north-south corridor on the far side of the Allegheny Mountains. The best east-west routes avoided the Alleghenies, heading west at the south of the range or north of it (via New York's Hudson River, Mohawk River, and Lake Erie). Paradoxically, the first white push across the Alleghenies was precisely via the middle routes, such as the Wilderness Road, when the northern and southern routes were blocked by other colonial powers or by Indians. The defeat of the French at Fort Duquesnes in 1758 and of the Indians at Point Pleasant, both on the Ohio River, in 1774, made the middle routes safer. After the Revolution, however, the better routes were secured, and many white settlers preferred to avoid the rough western mountains. Williams, West Virginia, 18-21; Barnhart, Valley of Democracy, 38.

interested in maintaining a familiar rural life than in maximizing market relations. The same dynamic prevailed in southern Illinois.[25]

Nowhere was the contradiction of disparate cultural backgrounds more evident than in the Upper Ohio River Valley. Several distinct societies developed in the trans-Appalachian frontier, evolving from differing preconditions. Already in 1789, sources of difference within the region were evident to Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory:

> The reservation for the Virginia officers upon the Scioto [the Virginia Military District] has turned the attention of many to that part of the country and as soon as it shall be open for settlement, a settlement will be made there where People from that state or from the District of Kentucky where they have been used to the laws & customs of Virginia will predominate. Higher up the Ohio comes the country purchased by the Ohio Company, which being composed of chiefly adventurers from Massachusetts & Rhode Island -- the first inhabitants are and will be from those states. Above them are the range of townships that have been sold, and as they have become the property of People from NYork & Pennsylvania & NJersey the Settlements will be made to people from those states.[26]

The provisions of the Northwest Ordinance helped develop – as intended – a political and social culture north of the Ohio River that was significantly different from the political and social culture to the south. But political subdivisions are artificial, and conditions in Kentucky and other parts of the south led more southerners to cross the river into Ohio. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this created cultural conflict within the population of white settlers, many of whom were squatters who had

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[25] Buley, The Old Northwest, 26; Cayton, Frontier Indiana, 271-73; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 80; Carrier, Illinois, 49-52.

[26] Quoted in Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, 245.

left their previous communities precisely from a dislike of authority and a desire for autonomy.[27]

The authors of the Northwest Ordinance and the members of the Ohio Company of Associates shared a Federalist mindset that emphasized strong government, strong property rights, systematic settlement, and industry and republican virtue – in other words, a vision of a well-ordered society explicitly based on New England ideals. The Federalists desired to integrate the Ohio Valley into the Atlantic economy. The West would be transformed and made a viable part of the Union, by "the exercise of authority – to maintain order, protect legitimate land titles, and foster economic development – by a strong national government." It was necessary "to bring order and system to a society of would-be autonomous individuals by encouraging the highest levels of economic, social, and cultural interdependence and homogeneity."[28]

The ideal presented a serious challenge. For instance, in Marietta, the governing elite of the Ohio Company had a strong commitment to authority and to enforcing their vision of social order through laws against gambling, drunkenness, cursing, disobedient servants, and Sabbath violation. Marietta's classical, harmonious geographic layout belied the disorderliness of the non-elites in the taverns on the riverfront. The Ohio

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[27] Andrew R. L. Cayton, The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825 (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 2-3. See also Andrew R. L. Cayton and Paula R. Riggs, City Into Town: The City of Marietta, Ohio, 1788-1988 (Marietta: Marietta College Dawes Memorial Library, 1991), 1-101.

[28] Onuf, Statehood and Union, xiii (first quote); Cayton, Frontier Republic, 14-32 (second quote is on 32). Also R. Douglas Hurt, The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Members of the Ohio Company of Associates were upset by social problems in their native Massachusetts, evidenced, e.g., by Shays' Rebellion, and looked to reignite the Puritan dream. Since they were, in their own description, "reputable, industrious, well-informed men" possessing "wealth, education, and virtue," they considered themselves the natural leaders of such a venture (Hurt, Ohio Frontier, 156).

Company elite notwithstanding, society in frontier Marietta was heterogeneous and not a little disorderly.[29]

Elsewhere in the Ohio Country, the Northwest Ordinance's intended cultural impact was even less pronounced; society was more individualistic and localistic. Since land within the Virginia Military District was largely claimed or bought by southerners, its culture was also southern: individualistic, competitive, and laissez-faire. The region was exempt from the systematic surveys prescribed by the Northwest Ordinance; instead, landholding followed the Virginia pattern. A southern cultural attitude also prevailed in Cincinnati, by early in the nineteenth century the military and financial center of the Ohio River Valley. Cincinnati in the early national period was a playground of disorderliness, awash in taverns and other dens of iniquity. Likewise, farther up the Ohio, closer to Pittsburgh, a non-New England culture prevailed. In 1800, most of the population of the Seven Ranges settlement had come from the area around Pittsburgh, and as such was in its cultural (Scotch-Irish Presbyterian/German) orbit.[30]

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[29] Cayton, Frontier Republic, 40-43; Hurt, Ohio Frontier, 160-86. Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 75-76. Marietta was laid out in squares: streets perpendicular to the Muskingum River were named for the Ohio Company's founders and colleagues (so as "to transfer a sense of public responsibility"), and the parallel streets were numbered. The intent was to create "'a perfect harmony' in design as well as predictability and regularity" (Hurt, Ohio Frontier, 182). But the Ohio Company was not utopian; their "ordered liberty [was] based on the equal opportunity for profit" (Hurt, Ohio Frontier, 160). Naturally, it would attract less "virtuous" profit-seekers! Hurt suggests that Mariettа's New Englandness was more evident in later times than in the frontier days of the New England natives (Ohio Frontier, 186).

[30] Cayton, Frontier Republic, 50-57, 63-67; James P. Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture: The Upper Ohio Valley, 1820-1825 (New York: DaCapo Press, 1969), 26. Cayton shows how these contrasting cultural attitudes played out in Ohio politics. After early domination by Federalists, the political balance shifted, with Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800, to the Jeffersonian Republicans who pushed Ohio toward statehood as a way to enhance local sovereignty. By 1825, Ohio's political institutions reflected a consensus of authority/autonomy and order/liberty that was seen as the guarantee of a prosperous future. Cayton confirms Miller's argument that the Virginia and Pennsylvania influences were most significant in Ohio: "... New England culture never succeeded in establishing itself in the Ohio Valley [Marietta notwithstanding]; it persisted merely as an influence, transmuted through contact with the more powerful native forces, and those of the South and East" (28). Miller groups the influence of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from Pennsylvania and New Jersey with the Virginia influence into a "backwoods" culture. See also David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York:

The result of these diverse influences and cultural clashes was a hybrid culture that emerged in the upper Ohio Valley by 1825. The Ohio River could be a border, but it was also a seam – or, perhaps better, a blurred rather than a straight edge. The influence of north on south and vice versa would persist, as much as would the distinction between north and south. The malleability of early Ohio Valley society would give many different peoples – including, soon, Jews – a hand in its formation.[31]

In the early nineteenth century, incorporation of the Ohio River Valley into the national framework took place through several interrelated mechanisms: political organization, the development of a market economy, and the growth of cities.

Political integration was accomplished as the territories north of the Ohio River were incorporated as states into the federal structure. The Land Act of 1800 divided the Northwest Territory into two: Ohio, which became a state in 1803, was one portion, and Indiana Territory the remainder. The area that is now the state of Michigan was split off from Indiana in 1805, and Illinois in 1809. Indiana became a state in 1816 and Illinois in 1818.

Simultaneously, old networks of Indian trade in the Ohio River Valley were giving way to a burgeoning market economy. From a trapping, hunting, and trading ground, the Ohio Valley quickly developed a market infrastructure. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Old Northwest "was one of the most highly commercialized agricultural areas in the world." The Ohio River, and its links to the Mississippi and

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Oxford University Press, 1989) and Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

31 Miller, Genesis of Western Culture, 42.

Missouri Rivers on a "trade axis," were the major features of this market development. The Ohio connected Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Louisville, to St. Louis, Natchez and New Orleans. Population grew and economic life diversified along this axis, especially after the Louisiana Purchase secured the route all the way to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.[32]

Transportation technology accelerated population growth and economic diversification. Steamboats appeared on the Ohio and Mississippi in 1811, making upriver transportation almost as easy as downriver. Growth of the river transport system was slow but steady; by 1820, there were sixty-nine steamboats on the river, their capacity supplemented (for downriver traffic) by flatboats and keelboats. By 1830, there were over 400 steamboats. New transportation technology, new transportation facilities, and the spread of commercial agriculture reinforced each other. "As a river of opportunity," as historian Darrel Bigham calls it, "an avenue for settlers, and the object of many of the internal improvements of the age, the Ohio stimulated expansion of agriculture and commerce, exploitation of natural resources, and development of manufacturing."[33]

The expansion of markets also demanded increasing skills from merchants, who played several vital roles in the developing Ohio River Valley. In the late eighteenth century, they were a link, via material objects, with the commercial East. As settlement

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[32] Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 93-100. Quote: Cayton and Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation, 25.

[33] Bigham in Reid, ed., Always a River, 142; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 173-77; Michael Allen, "The Ohio River: Artery of Movement," in Reid, ed., Always a River, 120. Rohrbough romanticizes the riverboat era a bit: "The sight of the steamboat rounding the long reach of the river, the distant wail of the whistle, and the tremor of excitement in the crowd became a striking feature of the trans-Appalachian frontier" in the 1815-1830 era (125). Allen criticizes the romanticization of riverboats and rivermen (105-21, passim).

and activity increased, merchants also functioned as middlemen for surplus agricultural produce (and therefore also as shippers) and eventually as informal bankers, through brokering and the extension of credit. By the early 1830s, one could distinguish three classes of merchants with distinct functions: wholesale merchants, commission agents (middlemen between local retailers, regional farmers, and eastern manufacturers), and retail shopkeepers.[34]

The development of the market economy, with its demands for centralization and bureaucratization, stimulated the development of cities in the Ohio Valley. In the 1820s and 1830s, most of the population of Ohio and Indiana was either on the Ohio River or in other southern river valleys. Illinois' population was also river-oriented, ranged around the Wabash, Ohio, and Mississippi. Today's major Ohio River cities, spawned in the late eighteenth century, expanded exponentially.[35]

Pittsburgh's development as a city was a function of its location at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongehela Rivers. In 1764, during a lull in Indian hostilities, a town had been laid out beyond the perimeter of Fort Pitt. Two major military roads converged at the site, making eighteenth-century Pittsburgh a natural setting for trade and defense, a gateway between the eastern commercial cities and the trans-Appalachian frontier, and an important intra-regional hub. The town's major importance was as a transshipment point for goods and people. During the large migrations to the Ohio Valley in the 1790s, local merchants outfitted the migrants, and as the migrants created

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[34] Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 43; Bigham in Reid, ed., Always a River, 143.

[35] Bigham, in Reid, ed., Always a River, 137-38.

new settlements in the Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh became as important to Valley commerce as Philadelphia or Baltimore.[36]

Cincinnati became the military and financial center of the Ohio River Valley after 1790, when Northwest Territorial governor Arthur St. Clair moved the territorial government from Marietta to Fort Washington. In 1800, Cincinnati's population was only about 750, but it soon experienced massive expansion with the coming of steamboat traffic on the Ohio. After the War of 1812, the city emerged as the most important commercial center of the Ohio River Valley; by 1830, it was the dominant city of the West, with a population of 25,000.[37]

Louisville's success was also related to the river because it provided a transshipment point around the rocky Falls of the Ohio. But Louisville only gradually attained major city status. In 1790, twelve years after its founding, the city had only two hundred residents; three other Kentucky towns were larger. By 1800, there were perhaps 800 residents in and close to the town. With the arrival of the steamboat, Louisville exploded – to a population of 4,000 in 1820 and over 11,000 in 1830. Though still smaller than Cincinnati, Louisville was by then the largest city in Kentucky.[38]

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[36] Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 12. Wade implies an inevitability to Pittsburgh's regional dominance: "No place in the West seemed more certain to be the site of a great city. Nature itself had made the suggestion unmistakably . . . . Here were all the classic requirements for a great city: water power, coal and iron, ready access to farm lands, and a market area of almost limitless extent" (10). See also Edward K. Muller, "Metropolis and Region: A Framework for Enquiry into Western Pennsylvania," in Samuel P. Hays, ed., City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 185; Miller, Genesis of Western Culture, 23-24.

[37] Wade, Urban Frontier, 22-26; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 100; Bigham in Reid, ed., Always a River, 138.

[38] Wade, Urban Frontier, 17; Harrison and Klotter, New History of Kentucky, 102-103. There were three urban competitors with Louisville for local dominance, one in Kentucky and two on the opposite bank in Indiana. Unlike Louisville, the other Kentucky town did not have a harbor safe from the falls. The two

These cities and smaller urban centers, were critical to regional growth, arguably even more important to the transformation of the trans-Appalachian West than the rural areas. Urbanization became a real force between 1795 and 1815, the same period that rivers were a major economic feature of the region. Each town "evolved an economy peculiar to its own location and resources," but commerce was the "central nexus" of urbanization. Merchants had a central role in town government; their priorities controlled local government spending and developed improvements such as roads and wharves.[39]

Manufacturing developed along with trade. In Jefferson County, Ohio, for example, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, there was factory-style weaving and fulling, whiskey distilling, shipbuilding, and manufacture of rope, iron, candles, and paper. Trade, manufacture, and urbanization were the components of a dynamic synergy, especially in the river valleys of the Muskingum (Marietta on the Ohio, and Zanesville farther north), the Scioto (Portsmouth), and the Miami branches (Cincinnati). Pittsburgh's iron rolling mills were set up in the early 1800s to minimize the need to ship heavy goods from the east. Even before 1820, Cincinnati had small-scale manufactures based on local products, such as a wool-carding mill, flour mills, and breweries.[40]

Though the trans-Appalachian West still contained societies with different levels of organization and sophistication, the elements of the social infrastructure – government administration, courts, militias, churches, and (in some places) schools – were in place by

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Indiana towns had the disadvantage of later development and of being cut off from their hinterland by hills (Wade, Urban Frontier, 14).

[39] Wade, Urban Frontier, 66, 77-79, 341-42; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 133-38. For American urban development before 1840, see also Zane L. Miller, The Urbanization of Modern America: A Brief History (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 1-24.

[40] Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 104-38; Wade, Urban Frontier, 47; Cayton, Frontier Republic, 113.

1815. Early Ohio Valley towns had social structures that reflected East Coast patterns with a tad more flexibility. Merchants were the most influential men in town, more so than the professionals – even ministers – and their position was made obvious through material display. Despite the rhetoric of egalitarianism, the drive to acquire and maintain status was as strong in the trans-Appalachian West as in the East.[41]

The success of those towns that are now major cities was not inevitable. The trans-Appalachian West was full of speculators with a variety of urban development schemes, some more rational than others. Most ideas failed to create major urban centers, and many never materialized at all. Success required more than a speculator's ambitious plan; it required a convergence of other interests and circumstances. Settlers came to the West for opportunities in towns as well as for opportunities to farm, and the ability to attract these settlers was critical to a town's success or failure. For example, the relatively late, and particular conditions of, settlement in southern Indiana and Illinois mitigated against the development of river cities. The southern portions of these states were largely agricultural; towns served only small hinterlands. Culturally, too, the "backwoods" character of their residents predisposed them against urban life.[42]

Competition for urban greatness was quite conscious – and quite fierce. In the early nineteenth century, the fiercest and most notable rivalry was between Pittsburgh,

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[41] Wade, Urban Frontier, 101-12, 128-57. Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 160-61.

[42] Wade, Urban Frontier, 34-35; Cayton, Frontier Indiana, 271-73; Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 80. Rohrbough (355-56) adduces the case of Bezaleel Wells, founder of Steubenville. In addition to advertising heavily, Wells provided land at little or no cost for county buildings in order to attract development. Sam Bass Warner suggests that the mode of American urban growth is in some ways inimical to community. The " usual American style was to seek out land for future speculation, to settle as individual families instead of in village groups, and to allow villages and towns to rise or not, depending upon the natural course of commerce and real-estate promotion" (The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City [Berkeley: U of California Press, 1995], 9). Warner also points out the ultimately deleterious effects of nineteenth-century speculation on modern urban America (19-20).

Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, Virginia. Wheeling had the advantage of a deeper Ohio River channel that was easily navigable year-round, a consideration that had dictated its selection as the Ohio River terminus of the National Road. As Pittsburghers grumbled that Wheeling was only a "miserable Virginia country town," the Virginians (in the tongue-in-cheek phrases of one observer) were "doing nothing but walking about on stilts, and stroking their chins with utmost self-complacency" and civic pride. The seriousness of Wheeling's challenge was only temporary; once Pittsburgh recovered from the post-1815 depression, Wheeling was eclipsed.[43]

Political geography was critical to this outcome. For years in the colonial era, Virginia and Pennsylvania had tussled over where the border between them should be. When the competing claims were finally settled in 1779, Pennsylvania unequivocally acquired Pittsburgh, putting the easiest land route to the head of the Ohio River entirely within that colony. The retention by Virginia of an odd northern panhandle of land meant that the northwest Virginia hinterland was separated politically from what was, as one historian makes clear, "its natural metropolis at Pittsburgh." In contrast to the rest of western Virginia, however, at least the northern panhandle did urbanize and industrialize in the early nineteenth century. Before 1800, Wellsburg had some manufacturing, and an iron furnace on the site of what is now Weirton began operations in 1794. Wheeling was the panhandle's pre-eminent manufacturing center by the mid-1830s.[44]

Within the larger region, rivalries also flourished among Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville, with considerable impact on the hinterlands. One historian notes that

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[43] Wade, Urban Frontier, 323-26.

[44] Williams, West Virginia, 22-23 (quote); Rice and Brown, West Virginia, 81-85.

"[l]ike imperial states, cities carved out extensive dependencies, extended their influence over the economic and political life of the hinterland, and fought with contending places over strategic trade routes . . . . Like most imperialisms, the struggle among Western cities left a record of damage and achievement. It trampled new villages, smothered promising towns, and even brought down established metropolises." Urban population growth rates vastly outstripped overall state population growth. Between 1810 and 1830, Ohio's population had grown four times, but Cincinnati's twelve times. Kentucky grew 50%, Louisville, 650%. Pennsylvania barely doubled; Pittsburgh tripled.[45]

By 1830, some small towns were already eclipsed by urban neighbors and settled into positions of dependency in the metropolitan area. Newport and Covington, Kentucky, opposite Cincinnati, "arose as extensions of the metropolis." Jeffersonville and New Albany, Indiana, settled into the shadow of Louisville. For the towns left in the dust of the rapidly expanding cities, local dominance was what was left to achieve.[46]

By 1830, urban life was well-established in the Ohio River Valley. As the larger towns of the region – Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville – continued to expand, they took on a different aspect from those towns that remained smaller. Increased social stratification was articulated and formalized through participation in civic, cultural, religious, and political institutions.[47]

Despite the rise of large cities, however, "the real urban center of the frontier was the small town." In the antebellum era, numerous small towns served as regional centers

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[45] Wade, Urban Frontier, 336, 341.

[46] Wade, Urban Frontier, 306.

[47] Wade, Urban Frontier, 229.

for professional services and agricultural supply and trade; each town was a "microcosm of the urban experience." Most of these towns were of a standard type, with similar physical features and business typology: the town miller, blacksmith, wainwright, saloon, and dry goods store. They were centers of education and religion, and in the second half of the nineteenth century, "the arbiters of taste, manners, and morals" for the American Midwest.[48]

The towns were central to the transformation of the Ohio Valley from a frontier to an integrated part of the American nation. Especially in the Old Northwest, "a powerful community formed much more by class interests than geography or politics – an urban and village bourgeoisie" – took shape. Merchants, tied to regional and national trade networks, linked local communities with communities and perspectives beyond themselves. The needs of stable community and of economic development were both served by the discipline of bourgeois values, and as the Old Northwest grew in commercial importance, bourgeois culture increasingly made sense.

"In no city of the Old Northwest," assert Andrew Cayton and Peter Onuf, "did bourgeois values take hold as early or as fully as Cincinnati." By 1825, as Cincinnati became a manufacturing as well as a regional market center, the Ohio River Valley gave birth to the nineteenth century's classic liberal bourgeois society. This society would be particularly receptive to America's growing Jewish population.[49]

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[48] Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 285-86, 377, 348-53.

[49] Cayton and Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation, 43-64. First quote is on 44, second quote on 53. Cayton and Onuf argue that this socio-economic identity became wedded to regional identity, creating the Midwestern American.

STATE AND CITY POPULATIONS 1790-1830

| Year | Pennsylvania (1) | | Ohio (1) | | Indiana (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | increase | | increase | | increase |
| 1790 | 434,373 | | n.a. | | n.a. | |
| 1800 | 602,365 | 38.67% | 45,365 | n.a. | 5,641 | n.a. |
| 1810 | 810,091 | 34.49% | 230,760 | 408.67% | 24,520 | 334.67% |
| 1820 | 1,049,458 | 29.55% | 581,434 | 151.96% | 147,178 | 500.24% |
| 1830 | 1,348,233 | 28.47% | 937,903 | 61.31% | 343,031 | 133.07% |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | Illinois (1) | | Kentucky (1) | | West Virginia (1) | |
| | | increase | | increase | | increase |
| 1790 | n.a. | | 73,677 | | 55,873 | |
| 1800 | n.a. | | 220,955 | 199.90% | 78,592 | 40.66% |
| 1810 | 12,282 | n.a. | 406,511 | 83.98% | 105,469 | 34.20% |
| 1820 | 55,211 | 349.53% | 564,317 | 38.82% | 136,808 | 29.71% |
| 1830 | 157,445 | 185.17% | 687,917 | 21.90% | 176,924 | 29.32% |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | Pittsburgh (2) | | Cincinnati (3) | | Louisville (4) | |
| | | increase | | increase | | increase |
| 1790 | n.a. | | n.a. | | 200 | |
| 1800 | 1,565 | | 750 | | 359 | 79.50% |
| 1810 | 4,768 | 204.66% | 2,540 | 238.67% | 1,357 | 277.99% |
| 1820 | 7,248 | 52.01% | 9,642 | 279.61% | 4,012 | 195.65% |
| 1830 | 15,369 | 112.04% | 24,831 | 157.53% | 10,341 | 157.75% |
| | | | | | | |

(1) A Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present (Stamford, CT: Fairfield Publishers, 1965), 12-13.

(2) Population Abstract of the United States, compiled by John L. Andriot (McLean, VA: Andriot Associates, 1983), 677.

(3) Population Abstract, 618.

(4) Population Abstract, 304.

## CHAPTER TWO: EARLY JEWISH HISTORY OF THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

The establishment of regional markets, the rise of urban centers on the river, and the beginning of Jewish settlement in the Ohio River Valley were linked phenomena. As the region became more urbanized, more economically integrated, and solidly joined to the East Coast base of the American nation – that is, as its frontier character diminished – Jewish interests and regional opportunity coincided.

In the colonial and early national eras, Richard Wade argues, "The towns were the spearheads of the frontier. Planted far in advance of the line of settlement, they held the West for the approaching population." Though most historians might not see a "line of settlement" in the way Wade does, the fact remains that economically viable towns were "spearheads" of the Jewish frontier, "holding the West" and nurturing the creation of Jewish centers that could support a dispersed regional population.[1]

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[1] Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 1.

By the time white Americans began flooding into the Ohio River Valley in the 1750s, Jews had lived in North America for a century. The core of the American Jewish community was a group of twenty-three refugees who arrived in the Dutch colonial city of New Amsterdam in 1654. Most of these twenty-three were Sephardim, Jews of Spanish origin whose families had been forced out of Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497 by triumphalist Catholic monarchs, or whose families had publicly become Christians until they could migrate from the Iberian peninsula to places where they could again practice as Jews: North Africa, Palestine, Greece and Turkey, the Italian city-states. Another favored destination for Sephardim was northern Europe, especially the burgeoning mercantile port cities of Hamburg and Amsterdam. The Netherlands also received immigration in the seventeenth century of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany and Poland.[2]

In the generally tolerant atmosphere of the Netherlands, Amsterdam Jews developed a full Jewish religious and cultural life and prospered economically. They participated in the burst of capitalist (or proto-capitalist) activity that was feeding exploration and colonization around the globe by all of Europe's powers. In addition to participating in trading and finance at home, some Dutch Jews ventured off to the colonies themselves. By 1645, almost fifteen hundred Jews resided in the Dutch colony in northeastern Brazil, especially in the city of Recife, which had been wrested from Portugal in 1630. The old threat seemed to be catching up with them, though, as the

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[2] This background comes from Eli Faber, A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654-1820, vol. 1 of The Jewish People in America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992). See also Jacob Rader Marcus's monumental three-volume work, The Colonial American Jew, 1492-1776 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970). It is important to remember that Jews were not subject to the Inquisition in Spain or Portugal unless they had converted to Catholicism and then suspected (as was easy) of the heresy of "Judaizing." However, the Catholic monarchs imposed stringent restrictions on Jewish life to keep Jews from influencing the converts, and anti-Jewish violence was common. H.H. Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 583-90.

Portuguese began to reconquer American territories, including Brazil; Jewish migration back to the home country of Holland increased in proportion to that threat. One group of twenty-three Jews decided instead in 1654 to head for New Amsterdam, the Netherlands' North American colony. Within a decade, yet another imperial power overtook them there, but one whose rule had much more beneficial consequences. In 1664, England capped a series of wars with the Dutch by capturing New Amsterdam and, in 1666, all of New Netherland, renaming both city and province, New York.[3]

Throughout the mid-seventeenth century, capitalism and Protestantism were changing traditional English social and political attitudes. Not overlooking the potential benefit to the nation of Jewish mercantile experience (and also influenced by Puritan philo-semitism), Oliver Cromwell's government in 1656 agreed to readmit Jews to residence in England after an absence of more than 350 years. England's growing religious toleration, added to the economic promise of its colonies, led more and more Jews in the eighteenth century, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, to migrate to North America from Holland and England and their colonies, or from central Europe via Holland or England.[4]

Most of these migrants were not wealthy (the London and Amsterdam Jewish communities encouraged their poor to emigrate), but almost all had previous experience

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[3] Not all Dutch authorities were welcoming. Governor Peter Stuyvesant and his council attempted to exclude Jews, first from residence, and then from other rights and privileges, but these moves were blocked by Dutch Jews' direct appeals to the proprietors of the Dutch West India Company. For the Jews in Dutch Brazil, see Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1: 69-81.

[4] For Jewish life in the Netherlands and England, see Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1:20-31; for Jewish life in New Netherland, 1:215-48; for detail on 18th c. Jewish migration to British North America, 1:251-96. For England, see also Todd M. Endelman, The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979). Jews had been expelled from England in 1290. When they were readmitted to residence in 1655, they were also permitted freedom of worship, though initially not to citizenship. Jews in Jamaica were granted British citizenship in 1661; other colonies, for instance, Rhode Island, had formal guarantees of religious liberty.

in market exchange. "The typical Jewish immigrant to eighteenth century America," Jacob Marcus writes, "was a German who had been raised in a village or small town where Jews were characteristically peddlers, cattle dealers, shopkeepers, petty moneylenders and pawnbrokers, traders and brokers." These Jews were aware of the economic expansion going on in Europe and of the developing Jewish role in this expansion. In America, they functioned as shopkeepers, merchants and shippers, roles vital to the colonies' development.[5]

The difference between a shopkeeper and a merchant was a matter of the extent of available capital, size of stock, and territory reached. Shopkeepers had fixed locations from which they sold a variety of goods. Marcus' survey of colonial merchants revealed a "surprising variety" of inventory: textiles, hardware, liquors, groceries, sugar, molasses, saddles and bridles, poultry, tobacco, dishware, tools, candles. Generally, shopkeepers obtained these goods on credit from a nearby merchant (Jewish or Gentile) and repaid him with whatever medium of exchange the shopkeeper's local customers used, usually agricultural produce, furs or hides, or (less often) cash.[6]

A merchant was one who "traded in bulk at a distance[:] his business was regional, interprovincial and, if he was a merchant-shipper, transatlantic." Again, the range of commercial interests was staggering. At various times, colonial Jewish merchants traded in – among other things – furs, liquor, soap and potash, grain, livestock, lumber, iron, rice, sugar, firearms, and slaves; they had interests in fishing, whaling, candle-making, distilling, shipbuilding, and milling. Many Sephardim and some Germans were involved in export and import, and were connected with established

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[5] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:519-22 (quote on 519).

[6] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:557-61.

networks of international commercial interests. As Marcus concludes in an understatement, "a bewildering heterogeneity prevailed in the business of buying and selling."[7]

Numbering at least 1,000 by the mid-1700s, the Jews of British North America resided primarily in Newport (R.I.), Philadelphia, New York, Charleston (S.C.), and Savannah, and traded up and down the Atlantic rim, including in the Caribbean, as well as back and forth to the ports of England and northern Europe. Through business and family connections – which were to a large extent identical – the Jews of North America truly lived in an Atlantic context: "[t]he practice of marrying around the Atlantic cemented existing mercantile ties, created new ones, and contributed to the perpetuation of the Jewish community in the New World."[8]

Jewish community life in colonial British North America was multi-faceted, if limited in scope. In 1656, a Jewish cemetery was established in New Amsterdam; the first synagogue building in New York was erected in 1731. Communities throughout the Western Hemisphere assisted each other in funding synagogues, obtaining kosher butchers and kosher food, and hiring cantors, teachers, and sextons.[9]

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[7] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:564-69. Marcus' survey of colonial American Jewish business extends to over 300 pages (2:519-54). Needless to say, the Jewish involvement in slave-trading was nowhere near monopolistic or even significant, either to Jewish business or to the slave trade as a whole. See Eli Faber, Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[8] Faber, A Time for Planting, 42. Two fascinating genealogical compilations by Malcolm Stern illustrate this graphically: Americans of Jewish Descent: A Compendium of Genealogy (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1960) and First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies 1654-1977 (Cincinnati and Waltham: American Jewish Archives and American Jewish Historical Society, 1978). The latter traces all families who were "established" in the United States by 1840. For the "Atlantic context" see, inter alia, Jack P. Greene, Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[9] For details on Jewish religious life, social welfare, and education in colonial America, see Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:855-1110.

Free from the external compulsion that in large part defined medieval European Jewish society, American communities were organized on a voluntary basis. But the transition was not easy. Differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi customs caused conflicts that had to be resolved by mutual compromise or by establishing separate synagogues. Old patterns of authority did not work in the American context: attempts to enforce religious observance (especially kashrut and Shabbat), payment of communal taxes, and acquiescence to communal leaders failed miserably. In contrast to Europe, Eli Faber notes, "[c]onditions in the English colonies . . . made such pretensions to hegemony dubious . . . . It was the complete lack of need for such a community that undermined it." In pre-modern Europe, Jews conformed to the rules of the community, which, in its official capacity, was the only agency that could provide for individual needs or could protect Jews from the depredations of the Gentile government. That was no longer the case in America.[10]

This did not, however, mean instant assimilation. The intermarriage rate between Jews and Christians in the eighteenth century was high, relative to all other times in American history with the exception of the past thirty years, but there were barriers to complete assimilation on both sides, from Gentiles who resisted and from Jews who valued their communal bonds. Many colonial Jews were traditionally observant, and many colonies imposed political disabilities on Jews (indeed, all non-Protestants). But American Jews – less than one-tenth of one percent of the population – exhibited a

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[10] Faber, A Time for Planting, 82. It was also becoming less and less the case in Europe, though through a considerably more difficult process. See Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages (New York: New York University Press, 1993) and Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998) and Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, The Transformation of the Jews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). See description of early New York's religious pluralism in Joyce Goodfriend, Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

considerable degree of acculturation in their material and intellectual culture and comfort in associating with Christians. And after the American Revolution, barriers to political participation also disappeared.[11]

Though primarily connected with the Atlantic trade, some colonial Jewish merchants also ventured into trading on America's frontiers, linking the North American interior to Atlantic commerce. In the mid-1700s, Daniel Gomez, based in New York City and a leader of the Jewish community there, traded in upper New York's Mohawk River Valley and in the wilds of central Pennsylvania. Opportunities soon presented themselves in the trans-Appalachian West. Long before actual Jewish settlement there, Jewish interests were involved. Jewish capital preceded Jewish individuals to the frontier; Jewish capital was flexible, whereas Jewish individuals preferred the psychic protection of the Jewish communities of the coastal cities. But "[b]elieving in the future of those vast reaches beyond the mountains," Jacob Marcus argues, "Jewish merchants were [through commerce] instrumental, if only to a modest extent, in opening the transallegheny West."[12]

The most active Jewish traders in the eighteenth-century Ohio River Valley were merchants based in Philadelphia, including Nathan Levy, David Franks, and Joseph Simon. They were soon joined in business by Barnard and Michael Gratz; the combinations and recombinations of Levy, Franks, Gratz, and Simon interests were

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[11] Jonathan D. Sarna, Benny Kraut, Samuel K. Joseph, eds., Jews and the Founding of the Republic (New York: Markus Wiener, 1985). For Jewish legal and political status in British North America, see Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1:397-515; for Jewish-Gentile relations, 3:1113-1248.

[12] Faber, A Time for Planting, 35; Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:849.

intricately intertwined with trade and land speculation schemes throughout the trans-Appalachian West for more than half a century starting in the 1750s.[13]

In the colonial era, Simon and Franks were at the pinnacle of economic success, true "merchant capitalists." The New York-born Franks was the nephew and early business partner of Nathan Levy, the first permanent Jewish resident, in 1737, of Philadelphia. Levy & Franks was soon the biggest Jewish firm in Pennsylvania. Simon was an immigrant from England who, in the 1740s, moved his base of operations to the hinterland Pennsylvania town of Lancaster. There he started trading local agricultural produce to Philadelphia in exchange for imported textiles and sugar. The Gratz brothers came from southeastern Silesia, an important area of commercial contact between western and eastern Europe. Members of their family had preceded them to London, providing important contacts for Barnard to use to settle there in 1750. In 1753 he came to Philadelphia to join the firm of Levy & Franks. Michael arrived in America in 1759 after years trading throughout Europe and Asia.[14]

A wide diversification of business interests was an absolute necessity for successful colonial merchants, to protect them against the consequences of the failure of any one enterprise. The Philadelphia group was indeed diversified. Joseph Simon was an arms manufacturer and dealer, iron exporter, distiller, precious metals fabricator, financier, bail bondsman, and small-scale slave trader as well as a fur trader and supplier to other western traders. David Franks was an army purveyor, shipper, insurance

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[13] For more background on the Philadelphia Jewish community and these prominent merchants, see Edwin Wolf 2nd and Maxwell Whiteman, The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957).

[14] Sidney M. Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz: Their Lives and Times (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 1-14, 28. Also Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1:278; 2:555-58, 612, 627. Barnard was born around 1737 and Michael around 1739; they died in 1801 and 1811, respectively.

provider, fur trader, mining investor, slave importer, land speculator, international banker and all-purpose merchant and financier. The Levy-Franks-Simon-Gratz business interests were structurally intertwined to the point where it is almost impossible to follow all the various partnerships and to separate joint from individual ventures. The Levy-Franks-Simon-Gratz families were also, like other colonial Jewish families (and with them), intricately intermarried. The Gratzes became involved in the western trade from contacts made through Joseph Simon, a close relative of Barnard's wife. Tightening the connection, Michael Gratz and Miriam Simon, Joseph's daughter, were married in 1769.[15]

The western trade took several forms: direct trade with the Indians, supply of other Indian traders, and military supply. Jewish merchants took part in all of these, though mainly the latter two. The Indian trade involved supplying textiles, foodstuffs, liquor and firearms to local native villages in exchange for furs that the Indians hunted and trapped. For Jews in British Canada, this was a major line of business; for American Jews, it was only one of many. Most American Jews preferred to supply other Indian traders in return for goods that included furs and other commodities. The western trade

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[15] Re Simon: Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:568, 659, 669, 671. Re Franks: Marcus, 2:568, 656-57, 662, 700. Re Gratzes: Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 78. Marcus explains the intricacies of partnership, agency, and other corporate forms (including marriage) in 2:583-603, and sorts out some of the Levy-Franks-Simon-Gratz arrangements in 2:593-97. Morris Schappes, Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875 (New York: Citadel Press, 1950) reprints two letters from Michael to Barnard Gratz, one from the 1770s and one from the 1790s, which discuss their complicated business affairs in such detail as to be almost incomprehensible to the outsider (42-44, 73-76). Some of these Jewish families were also intermarried with wealthy Christian families. David Franks married Margaret Evans, from a well-connected political family in Philadelphia; they raised their children as Christians (Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 3:1152). David's sister Phila, in New York, married Oliver DeLancey.

was usually conducted at a distance through subordinates or agents who conducted the actual face-to-face barter with the Indians.[16]

In 1760, the Philadelphia syndicate – at this point including Levy Andrew Levy and William Trent (a non-Jew) – set up a trading facility on the Forks of the Ohio at Fort Pitt to trade with local Indians, supply white settlers, and provision the British military. By the late 1760s, the firm had become the principal supplier to George Croghan, the leading Indian trader in the trans-Appalachian West, and its interests extended throughout the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, the Great Lakes, and the Illinois country.[17]

The frontier trade was a risky business. Simon, Franks, and the Gratzes regularly sustained losses from Indian raids on military and trading posts that they supplied. Deploying their capital flexibly, when the western trade was disrupted by the French and Indian War, the Philadelphians shifted much of their business commitment to other, less risky ventures as they could. The Gratzes, for example, concentrated on the Caribbean trade. Most of the risks faced by the Philadelphia Jewish merchants in the western trade were financial, but the reality of frontier life came particularly close to home when Levy A. Levy (Joseph Simon's partner, nephew, and son-in-law) was captured by the Wyandots near Fort Pitt in 1763 and held for a short time. He soon returned to calmer eastern Pennsylvania.[18]

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[16] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:719-27.

[17] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:725-50. After France, which forbade Jewish presence in its territories, lost its North American lands, Jewish traders also began to come up the Mississippi into Illinois territory. Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1:375-76.

[18] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 71-78; Jacob S. Feldman, The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History, 1755-1945 (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986), 3-6. Marcus, Colonial American Jew (2:729) is the only source that mentions the specific tribe.

If the frontier wars caused some financial hardships, British military needs created ample opportunity in another aspect of western trade, army supply. Here also Jewish businessmen provided a wealth of goods and services, including foodstuffs, clothing, hardware, armaments, and transportation. During the French and Indian War, Joseph Simon was provisioner to British troops, and his firm Simon & Henry manufactured and sold rifles. The Franks family, which dealt in military supplies from as early as 1739 through the Revolution, served as England's chief agents for army supply. Connections with relatives in business in England, the largest source of arms, were critical to the Frankses' success.[19]

The financial risk of military supply, of course, rested with the ability and willingness of governments to pay their debts. The western involvement looked like it had the potential to pay large rewards when the Crown started doling out land grants to traders as compensation for losses in the wars, similar to the compensation in land warrants given to soldiers. Though not themselves remunerated, Franks, Simon, and the Gratzes in the 1760s and 1770s became owners of considerable acreage around Pittsburgh as payments from George Croghan for his debts to them.[20]

Opportunities in western landowning seemed hugely promising, and these merchants soon became involved in the flurry of land speculation. Joseph Simon and John Campbell throughout the 1770s held mortgages on much of the land where present-day Louisville is located. The Gratzes bought and sold their own and others' land and

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[19] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:706-18. Marcus also reports that when the British leadership waged germ warfare by giving the Indians textiles infected with smallpox, "it was one of David Franks's partnerships, Simon, Trent, Levy & Company, that replaced the goods expended in this bacteriological phase" of the war (2:717).

[20] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 43-61, 71-78, 84-92. Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:764.

land warrants in what is now West Virginia and Kentucky. In the early 1770s, they and David Franks bought shares in the Grand Ohio Company and its "grand" – and ultimately unsuccessful – Vandalia scheme for the Indiana and Illinois lands, and helped finance others' involvement.[21]

During the Revolution, the Gratzes and Simon pulled back somewhat from the western trade, as a financial precaution, though they did do some business in provisioning American troops at Fort Pitt and supplying the military expeditions of George Rogers Clark in the Illinois country. Like many other American Jews, their political loyalties were pro-patriot, and they signed on to (though, like most American merchants, occasionally violated) patriot boycotts and non-importation movements.[22]

David Franks, however, was a Loyalist, which proved the end of his career in America. He had continued selling to the British military after the outbreak of the Revolution, while simultaneously supplying American troops – not a workable situation. In 1778 Franks was arrested for the first of three times, lost his American contracts, and was evicted from Pennsylvania. After an interlude in Tory New York, he ended up, like many displaced American Loyalists, impoverished, living out his life in England.[23]

Only the Gratzes retained an active interest in the Ohio Valley after the Revolution. When George Croghan died in 1782, Barnard and Michael Gratz were owners, through sale or bequest, of large amounts of his original property, including over

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[21] Article on "Jews" by Herman Landau, in John E. Kleber, ed., The Kentucky Encyclopedia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 470; Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 93-112; Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:757-58.

[22] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 143; Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 3:1315-26, 1264, 1296. Marcus discusses the reasons for colonial Jews' political sympathies in same, 3:1249-1314.

[23] Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:836; 3:1278, 1294-99.

sixty-percent of Croghan's orginal 200,000 acre grant around Pittsburgh. They were also the executors of his estate. Michael's sons Simon and Hyman, though still based in Philadelphia, financed trading ventures in Pittsburgh, Kentucky, and Indiana.[24]

In addition to trading, the Gratzes were involved in Ohio River shipping, taking advantage of the huge increase in traffic sparked by white migration to the Ohio River Valley. In 1793, Jacob Myers, a Gratz business associate (and probably a relative), advertised in the Pittsburgh Gazette the availability of river transport from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati. The best advertisement that could be made for his boats was their safety. Ohio River traffic in the 1790s still fell prey to guerilla attacks from Indians and to the predations of white outlaws. Myers' advertisement averred that he had "taken great pains to render the accommodations on board the boats as agreeable and convenient as they could possibly be made," including the promise that "every person on board will be under Cover, made proof against rifle or musket balls [with] convenient portholes to fire out of." Likewise, "[c]onveniences [toilet facilities] are constructed in each boat so as to render landing unecessary, as it might be at times attended with Danger."[25]

The Gratz family retained its land interests for the long term, although not all of the investments paid off. In the mid-1770s, Franks and the Gratzes had invested in the Illinois and Wabash Land Companies, which had elaborate plans for the settlement of

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[24] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz,167; William Vincent Byars, ed., B. and M. Gratz, Merchants in Philadelphia, 1754-1798: Papers of Interest to Their Posterity and the Posterity of their Associates (Jefferson City, Mo.: Hugh Stephens Printing Co., 1916), 257. The hamlet of Gratz, Kentucky, about twenty miles from the Ohio River down the Kentucky River, is on the site where the Gratzes' merchandise was unloaded for transport farther to the interior.

[25] Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, A New History of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 52; Michael Allen, "The Ohio River: Artery of Movement" in Robert L. Reid, ed., Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 110-12. Myers' advertisement, dated October 14, 1793, is reprinted in Allon Schoener, The American Jewish Album, 1654 to the Present (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1983), 39. A similar advertisement dated November 2, 1793, is reprinted in Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 245-46.

what became the states of Indiana and Illinois. The company's claims on this project were not finally settled (by being invalidated) until 1823, a great disappointment to the Gratz heirs. Barnard's daughter Rebecca wrote to her brother Benjamin while he was in Indiana in 1819: "The Illinois and Wabash claim, of which I have all my life heard so much, seemed like a romance – I never expected to see anything but maps and pamphlets of the subject . . . . but since it has proceeded so far – I catch a little of the mania and frame wishes for its success . . . ." These wishes came to nothing, of course. The Gratzes did retain some land interests in western Pennsylvania until the late 1830s, gradually selling off the holdings.[26]

So by the early national period, the financial involvement of the colonial Jewish merchant families in the Ohio River Valley had essentially petered out. None of the members of these families actually lived there, either before or even after the Revolution, with the exception of Benjamin Gratz, who settled in Lexington, Kentucky in 1819. The colonial Jewish merchants had spent time in the Ohio River Valley, keeping track of their various enterprises. In the 1770s, before the Revolution, Barnard Gratz, Joseph Simon, and David Franks made numerous business trips to Pittsburgh and spent considerable time there. Mordecai Moses Mordecai, a sometime partner of Simon, and his wife Zipporah operated a tavern near Pittsburgh from 1775 to 1779, but they too returned east.[27]

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[26] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 133-141, 155-78 (quote is on 155); Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 9-10.

[27] Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 3-6; Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 1:331. A Gratz associate, one Salomon, was in Kentucky's first settlement of Harrodsburg in 1808; one John Jacob was in Shepherdsville, south of Louisville, in 1802. Salomon, Jacob and Gratz all married Christian women and raised Christian children. See Lewis N. Dembitz, "Jewish Beginnings in Kentucky," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 1 (1893): 99. (Dembitz was the uncle of Louis Dembitz Brandeis, the Supreme Court justice.) See also Lee Shai Weissbach, "Kentucky's Jewish History

The Ohio Valley – the whole trans-Appalachian West – was not yet a place for acculturated, yet observant Jews. These Jews were urbanites, comfortable in the provincial European-derivative culture of America's eastern cities; they had a busy social circle and were concerned for the proper education of their children. Joseph Simon and the Gratz brothers kept kashrut and Shabbat, and observed the holidays carefully, practices for which residence in Philadelphia – or even in the small community in Lancaster – was more congenial. For the Gratz-Simon-Franks-Levy combine, the frontier was a place to be exploited. Its land was a commodity, not a potential home. It would be newer immigrant Jews who would form the bases of permanent Jewish communities in the Ohio Valley in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[28]

Between 1780 and 1820, the Jewish population of the United States nearly doubled. From a "possible maximum" of 1,500 in 1790, Jewish population expanded to a "probable maximum" of 2,750 in 1820. At the same time, the total population of the United States increased two and a half times, growing from 3,929,000 in 1790 to 9,638,000 in 1820, in some of the largest annual percentage growth spurts in history.[29]

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in National Perspective: the Era of Mass Migration," Filson Club History Quarterly 69 (July 1995), 256. Dembitz puts Gratz's arrival at 1816. Dembitz, in another article ("Kentucky," The Jewish Encyclopedia [1906], 7:467-68) states that two German-Jewish brothers named Heymann (or Hyman) settled in Louisville around 1814. No other source follows up on this. Benjamin Gratz was a political ally of Henry Clay, advocate for internal improvements in the state, and had many other civic involvements. (Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 264).

[28] Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 129, 139, 182-84. Barnard and Michael were among the founding donors and active leaders of Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia; members of the Gratz family were responsible for 40% of the total amount of money raised from 120 families for the congregation's building in 1825 (Fish, 197-221). See also the section on Jews in the western movement in Marcus, Colonial American Jew, 2:746-67.

[29] Ira Rosenwaike, in On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1985), 3; Richard B. Morris and Jeffrey B. Morris, eds., Encyclopedia of American History, 7th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 632.

Most of the national growth was natural increase; only about 250,000 immigrants came to the United States between 1783 and 1815, largely from the same countries as pre-independence immigrants. The Napoleonic wars were the primary factor keeping emigration from Europe low. With the decline of Atlantic commerce under international political pressures in the early national period, America was even less attractive to that cosmopolitan segment of Jewry that was riding the wave of western European modernization. Jews were living comfortably in England, where they were undergoing a process of secularizing, voluntarism, acculturation, and social integration not unlike that in America. Colonial America had also attracted considerable German immigration, but conditions were changing in the German states. In some, political, social and economic conditions were improving, blunting the need for emigration; in those where conditions were worsening, it was often difficult to leave.[30]

The small Jewish population of the early nineteenth-century United States grew ever more comfortable living in the American environment. In lieu of Atlantic commerce, American Jews found niches as local merchants and artisans. They rebuilt communities dislocated by the Revolution and built new ones. American culture had more and more influence on Jewish religious practice, from the introduction of an organ into Savannah's new synagogue to the adoption of written constitutions for congregational governance. Jews' confidence in America was confirmed by the fact that,

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[30] Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, Natives and Strangers: A Multicultural History of Americans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 68. "During the first two decades of the nineteenth century war and other restraints on emigration had kept the transatlantic movement at a low level" (John Higham, Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America, rev. ed. [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1984], 21). For England, see Endelman, Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830.

despite opposition and the necessity for extensive lobbying, Jews enjoyed civil equality in all but a few political jurisdictions by the mid-1820s.[31]

America's colonial era Jewish residents had been true pioneers in the creation of modern Jewish identity. In Eli Faber's words, they were "exploring the implications of living where Jews were not the objects of debilitating hostility. They were among the first Jews in the modern world to experiment with acculturation . . . . to envision a synthesis in which Jewish tradition could combine with elements of the surrounding culture without being undermined." Being themselves on the frontier of world Jewry, perhaps it is not surprising that American Jews were not yet on the physical frontier of the nation. But the urban frontier of the trans-Appalachian West began to create in Jews' minds the vision of new opportunities. At the same time, conditions for central European Jews changed in ways that motivated mass emigration. The confluence of these factors brought Jews to settle in the Ohio River Valley, to establish homes, businesses, and congregations, first in the cities and, increasingly, in the promising small towns.[32]

In the state of Ohio, population doubled between 1810 and 1820, with the majority of the population still in the southern river valleys. These circumstances provided the setting for the settlement of Jews in Ohio and the establishment of America's first Jewish city of the West – Cincinnati. By 1830, Cincinnati was "the symbol of the rising new cities of the West. Immigrants – at least 'those classes which seek large towns' [such as Jews] – found it 'the largest, the most increasing, and the most

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[31] Faber, A Time for Planting, 108-26, 141.

[32] Faber, A Time for Planting, 142.

convenient.'" The Jewish community of Cincinnati was among those permanent cultural institutions in the West that marked the end of the frontier stage of Ohio's history.[33]

In his seminal 1900 article, "The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," Rabbi David Philipson undertook to find the first Jew in Cincinnati. He was able to locate one Benjamin Leib (or Lape), who, upon his death in 1821, requested a Jewish burial; but apparently Leib had not lived as a Jew, had not publicly identified as such, and had married a non-Jew and raised Christian children. Concludes Philipson, "There may have been other instances like this in the recently founded town, of Jews by birth who were not known nor recognized as such, but we possess no knowledge nor record of them." It is evident, though, that in Cincinnati, as in other cities and towns on the western frontier, Jewish business travelers came through the region well before any Jews settled permanently. These transients give fleeting hints: a name in a newspaper advertisement in 1814, another advertisement for a physician/medical salesman in 1816.[34]

Cincinnati's first identifiable Jew was the English-born Joseph Jonas, a watchmaker and silversmith in his mid-twenties, who immigrated in 1816 and arrived in Cincinnati via Philadelphia in 1817. Like many immigrants, Jonas' imaginings of America were inspired by books; he claimed that he had been influenced to settle in the Ohio River Valley by descriptions of the area which he had read as a young man. At least in his later years, he viewed his Jewish pioneering in terms analogous to the visions of the Puritans: Cincinnati, in "the Great West," was "the new resting place for the

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33 Wade, Urban Frontier, 195. Wade does not mention Jews specifically, but the extrapolation is clearly warranted.

34 David Philipson, "The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 8 (1900): 44; Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 1, 24.

scattered sons of Israel . . . [where] a great sanctuary should be erected . . . ." Jonas was convinced that it would be possible to make a life as a Jew, even in such isolated circumstances. In this, he set a pattern for many in small Jewish communities in the ensuing years of Jewish settlement throughout the expanding United States.[35]

Jonas accepted with good grace his status as a tourist site for curious local non-Jews. There is a famous story that he was visited in Cincinnati by a local Quaker woman, who, intrigued to meet a real, live Jew for the first time in her life, looked him over several times before declaring, "thou art no different to other people!" Jonas came to a conclusion that many small town Jews were to reach: that America's opening society offered opportunities to re-cast the Jewish social position. "From the experience which we have derived by being the first settlers," Jonas later wrote, ". . . . we arrive at the conclusion that the Almighty will give His people favor in the eyes of all nations if they will only conduct themselves as good citizens in a moral and religious point of view . . . ." Here in America, one need not struggle under the burden of an inherited, despicable reputation. The assumptions of equality gave the individual – and by extension the group – a blank slate. The Biblical rhetoric of "finding favor" should not be misinterpreted. A new society did require of Jews a new approach to life. But far from cravenly and fearfully caving in to American Protestant values, early nineteenth-century Jews sought only the freedom offered to everyone to make his own place.[36]

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[35] Sarna and Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati, 2-3, 25. Quotes are on 25. Jonas's memoir (the source of the selection in Sarna and Klein) is included in Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), 205-15, and in Schappes, ed., Documentary, 223-35.

[36] Philipson, " The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," 48-49. The story of the Quaker was told to Philipson by Jonas' daughter. (It is also quoted in Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 27.)

Within a few years a number of other English Jews settled in Cincinnati. Joseph Jonas' brother Abraham arrived in 1819; in the 1820s, they married sisters, Rachel and Lucia Seixas, daughters of Gershom Mendes Seixas, New York City's first professional Jewish communal leader. Also among the earliest arrivals to the city were two English immigrants with some experience on the frontier, David and Eliza Israel, who used the surname Johnson in the United States. David's brother had been an Indian trader on the Whitewater River in east-central Indiana during the 1810s. After two years with him there, the Johnsons repaired to the more cosmopolitan setting of Cincinnati in 1820.[37]

Despite the lack of a traditional minyan (quorum of ten men required for communal prayer), this small group of Cincinnati Jews held High Holidays services in the fall of 1819 and celebrated Passover together in the spring of 1820. Eighty years later, Rabbi Philipson admired the "great desire and zeal which must have possessed them to participate in such a service." One need not disparage their spiritual devotion to suggest that their zeal was also driven by the pioneers' utter confidence in the future of their new settlement. Small Jewish communities organized with the expectation that they would grow; as they began the process of integrating Jewish psychic space into the physical space of the frontier, the optimism of America led them to see themselves as seeds of a greater enterprise.[38]

Cincinnati soon fulfilled this promise. In the 1820s, migrants from Germany supplemented the small English and Dutch Jewish community. The 1825 Cincinnati city

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[37] The Seixas family had come to America from Portugal in 1730. Gershom Mendes Seixas was not an ordained rabbi, and he had only a modest Jewish education. His role was that of *chazan* or prayer-leader. He was often referred to as the "minister" of New York City's Congregation Shearith Israel (Faber, A Time for Planting, 92, 119-20). For information on the Johnsons and others, see Philipson, "The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," 46-48.

[38] Philipson, " The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," 47.

directory listed twelve individual Jewish men, of whom nine were English immigrants, one a German, and two native-born. Four of the men described themselves simply as "merchants" and two other listed commercial specialities, auctioneer and grocer-tobacconist. Two were watchmakers, one a tailor, and one a distiller, rounding out an occupational profile that would come to be typical of nineteenth-century American Jewry.[39]

In 1824, a formal congregation, named Bene Israel, was organized and in 1830 legally incorporated, with eighteen men listed as incorporators. In 1836, the congregation dedicated its first building, the first synagogue in the Old Northwest Territory. This was accomplished with generous financial support elicited from Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, and other American and English congregations. That dramatic fundraising letter of 1825, offering vicarious participation in the expansion of Judaism and of the American West, was evidently effective.[40]

The pioneering role of Cincinnati's Jewish communal organization is even clearer when compared to the slower start of the communities in the other two major Jewish cities of the Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh and Louisville. There is evidence of some transient Jewish population in the Kentucky city even in the first decade of the nineteenth century, but it was the 1830s before there were as many as ten families. Likewise, Pittsburgh's early nineteenth-century population apparently included a few intermarried Jews (mostly men, though at least one woman). "But so far as is known," an historian of Jewish

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[39] Philipson, " The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," 47-48. The list is reprinted in Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 28. Entries for two of the men list no occupation.

[40] Philipson, " The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," 47-53; Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 28-31.

Pittsburgh concluded, "not a single Jew who wished to be recognized as such lived in Pittsburgh for more than two months during the fifty years between 1788 and 1838."[41]

In the 1820s, the pace of Jewish immigration to the United States began to quicken. From about 2,700 in 1820, the American Jewish population grew by 1830 to about 4,000. This was still a migration of individuals (almost always young men) and small family groups, and there was still more Jewish migration to the United States from the traditional sources of England and Holland than from any other country. Immigration accelerated dramatically in the 1830s. The census numbers tell the story: 4,000 Jews in the United States in 1830, and 15,000 in 1840. Between 1750 and 1800, large numbers of Jews from Poland moved into the German states, swelling the Jewish population there from 65,000 to as much as 200,000. From the 1830s on through the mid-nineteenth century, European Jewish population continued to move westward. A mass migration was underway, as German Jews, buffeted by contradictory forces of economic and social change, sought new lives across the Atlantic.[42]

Though Cincinnati attracted the most, a small number of Jews began in the 1820s and 1830s to filter into other areas of the Ohio River Valley. Rabbi Morris Feuerlicht of Indianapolis, in an article about Indiana for the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia of 1941, claimed that the first Jewish settlement in the state was at Rising Sun, about twenty miles west of Cincinnati, in about 1825. Since by 1833, Rising Sun had only 600 inhabitants, it seems improbable that there was a Jewish "community" in a meaningful sense. However, it is not improbable that there was a single Jewish man or two – especially

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[41] Dembitz, The Jewish Encyclopedia, 7:467-68; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 12.

[42] Rosenwaike, Edge of Greatness, 1-17, 36, 41.

given the proximity to Cincinnati – and perhaps Feuerlicht was acquainted with a relative of one of these men. The earliest documented Jewish residents of southeast Indiana, appearing in the 1830 census, were the Isaac Levy family of Switzerland County. The family had immigrated from Hungary and consisted of a younger couple and an older, perhaps parents of the younger.[43]

A few Jewish names also appear in rural areas in the 1830 Ohio census. Mordecai Levy was in Brown County on the Ohio River east of Cincinnati; perhaps he peddled out of Cincinnati. Peter and Reuben Israel were in Belmont County, just west of Wheeling and Pittsburgh; perhaps they peddled from one of those two cities. A few individual Jews may have entered what is now West Virginia as early as 1825, but there were no real communities until the 1840's. By 1840, there were Jews "widely scattered" in the Old Northwest Territory. But the Ohio Valley was particularly attractive.[44]

As later American Jews surveyed the trajectory of their acceptance into American life, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 stood out to some as having been particularly significant. Since the Ordinance applied the federal guarantees on freedom of religion to this territory and to the states that would be carved from it, Jews in the Northwest Territory were from the beginning in a position of political equality. But social as well as

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[43] Re Rising Sun: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: UJE, Inc., 1941), 5:557. The problem is what is meant by "settlement." In 1830, over 90% of American Jews were in cities, with 64% in New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston alone (Rosenwaike, Edge of Greatness, 32-33); History of Dearborn, Ohio and Switzerland Counties, Indiana (Chicago: Weakley, Harraman & Co., 1885), 360.Re Switzerland County: Rosenwaike, Edge of Greatness, 135. Isaac Levy died in 1850 at the reported age of 101 (Rosenwaike, 162). A "Mr. Cohen" had the Eagle Tavern in Chillicothe in 1816 (James P. Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture: The Upper Ohio Valley 1800-1825 [New York: DaCapo Press, 1969], 20). Hyman Lazarus, a German immigrant of 1818, peddled in southeastern Ohio, settling down with his Christian wife in the village of Malta (Richard W. Welch, "The Assimilation of an Ethnic Group: The German-Jewish Peddlers in the Upper Ohio Valley, 1790-1840," [Masters thesis, Michigan State University, 1972], 39, 68). Welch is a descendant of Lazarus.

[44] Welch, " Assimilation of an American Ethnic Group," 82; for West Virginia, Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), 12:510; R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), 2:487.

legal change provided the comfortable context for Jewish community growth in the egalitarian climate of the Jacksonian era. The diversity of religious groups in the Ohio River Valley made it "the first 'testing ground' for religious pluralism in America."[45]

In the early national period, it was market relations within the Ohio Valley and between the Valley and the Atlantic seaboard cities that "closed" the Euro-Americans' frontier by decisively linking the region to the nation. Before the 1820s, Jewish merchants were on the eastern end of these links. As Jews moved west, they came to inhabit a frontier of new market encounters and new social, cultural and religious interpenetrations. A frontier of religious and cultural pluralism emerged as the geographical frontier receded, and as groups met and dealt with one another in the expanding market.[46]

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[45] Stanley Chyet, "The Political Rights of the Jews in the United States: 1776-1840," American Jewish Archives 10 (April 1958): 14-75. The Jewish attitude described here certainly reflects an increasing reverence about the Ordinance generally among Americans in the late nineteenth century, who saw it as expressing moral law, especially with respect to slavery (Peter S. Onuf, Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 133-52. Quote: Eric Hinderaker, Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 259.

[46] Kim Gruenwald, "Marietta's Example of a Settlement Pattern in the Ohio Country: A Reinterpretation," Ohio History 105 (Summer-Fall 1996): 125-44.

## PROLOGUE: THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

In the century between 1750 and 1850, the political, social and economic changes identified as modernization began to change dramatically the life of traditional European Jewry. Soon, too, westward movement rearranged the demography of European Jewry, just as, beginning with the Old Northwest Territory, westward movement on the North American continent began to reshape the United States. Together, these phenomena helped create new Jewish communities in the Ohio River Valley, for ultimately, the roots of the Valley's small-town Jewish communities can be found in the small towns of southern Germany and eastern France.

The European Jews who chose migration to America in the nineteenth century were heirs to a Jewish culture which had existed for centuries in a situation of complete social subservience within medieval Christendom, but which, beginning in the

seventeenth century, was slowly remade by the forces of social, political, and economic modernization.[1]

Medieval European Jewish society was not merely physically and socially separate from the surrounding Christian society; legally, Jews had no intrinsic rights of residence or livelihood and were subject entirely to the needs (especially economic), religious passions (or religious politics), and even mere whims of local rulers. Massacres and expulsions were commonplace. Throughout these upheavals, European Jewish communities could hold together because, as separate corporate entities within Christian feudalism, they were permitted to develop their own modes of internal governance, a comprehensive system known as the *kehillah* (Hebrew, lit., community). Ironically, the strictures placed on Jews fostered an atmosphere in which self-help and provisions for mutual security sustained a strong and positive Jewish identity. Contact with non-Jews was entirely utilitarian, for economic and political purposes only; Christians seemed as alien (and as innately inferior) to Jews as Jews seemed to Christians. For pre-modern Jews, subservience in the temporal sphere was the price paid for living in an unredeemed world.[2]

Better times on earth did not, of course, arrive in an instant. Economic, political, intellectual, spiritual, and social changes were all intertwined: the rise of capitalism and the market economy; rationalism and secularism; centralized political organization; and

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[1] The classic work on the transition to modernity, first published in 1958, is Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages (New York: New York University Press, 1993). A social-structural, rather than cultural, approach is taken by Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman in The Transformation of the Jews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[2] For a summary of the medieval situation, see Robert M. Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 355-64. For detailed background of Jewish-Christian relations, see Kenneth R. Stow, Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). For *kehillah* structure and operation, see Katz, Tradition and Crisis, 65-102, and for Jewish attitudes to Christians, 20-23.

the concept of the nation-state. Jews as a group were, ironically, in a good position to take advantage of new economic developments precisely because of their medieval disadvantages. Laws had prohibited Christians from money-lending, while at the same time prohibiting Jews from virtually all livelihoods **except** money-lending and commerce. It might even be said that European Jewry was proto-capitalist, since, as permanent temporary residents, their capital had always been more liquid and their economic strategies more flexible. From the Rothschilds to the street peddler, Jews' traditional economic activity became progressively de-stigmatized as money and markets expanded. "The more that money was recognized as vital to the state's economy," Jacob Katz writes, "the more bargaining power the Jew had."[3]

Enlightenment philosophical conceptions of political organization and the radical spiritual individualism of the Protestant movement also slowly began to change Gentile thinking about the possibilities of the Jewish position in European society. By the 1700s in both England and Holland, the only restrictions on Jews were those borne also by other religious non-conformists. However, before 1750 in most places, changes in Jewish-Gentile relations and in perceptions each held of the other were still sporadic and barely recognizable. By the 1770s and 1780s, social changes in Jewish-Gentile relations became more evident, and political changes followed. The first significant breaches were made to social and intellectual barriers at the level of the Jewish elite, those Jews first exposed to secular European culture in the late eighteenth century. Calls for equal Jewish political rights were heard more regularly, and now on the Continent. But for every two

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[3] Katz, Tradition and Crisis, p. 41; for Jews as proto-capitalists, see 40-51. For Jewish involvement in early capitalism, see Howard M. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 17-27; Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, 501-502; and Selma Stern, The Court Jew (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950).

steps forward, there always seemed to be one step backward, and a tension of acceptance and rejection characterized the precarious path of Jewish emancipation and integration at the start of the nineteenth century. Legislation began to change the legal status of Jews in a patchwork fashion, but Gentile responses still molded the reality of Jewish social status.[4]

With the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon, Jews in many areas – from Alsace to Prussia – gained citizenship, though it was often a second-class version. Alsatian Jews still faced residential and occupational restrictions, and while Napoleonic rule emancipated many Jews in many southern and central German lands, no changes reached strongly antisemitic Bavaria. In 1812 Prussia affirmed Jewish citizenship and abolished various restrictions, but excluded from these rights the numerous Jews in Poznań (Posen). And Napoleon's final defeat short-circuited even this tentative and erratic process: only in France, where Jewish emancipation was most closely related to systemic political change, did the changes of that era hold.[5]

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[4] Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, 517-18; Jacob Katz, Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 41-42, 162-66. For the 18th c. Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*) and its ultimately unsuccessful struggle to create a synthesis of German and Jewish identities that would foster a neutral, secular, and rational modern society, see Katz, Tradition and Crisis, 214-36, and Out of the Ghetto, 42-56; and Steven Lowenstein, The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). One call for equal rights was Christian Wilhelm von Dohm's "Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews," reprinted in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 30. But as revealed by the title of this essay, which can also be translated as "Concerning the Civic Betterment [*bürgerliche Verbesserung*] of the Jews," von Dohm was largely concerned with Jewish **fitness** for, rather than rights to, citizenship (a fitness which philosophers like Locke assumed is inherent in humanity).

[5] Paula Hyman, The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 17-29; Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, 524-27; Sachar, Course of Modern Jewish History, 38-61. For the full story of Napoleonic policy and how it foreshadowed Europe's move to greater Jewish integration, see Simon Schwarzfuchs, Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

Germany remained a patchwork of small states, all of which quickly revoked Jewish legal gains and even in some cases reimposed medieval restrictions, including the ghettos. Despite some new opportunities (e.g., for secular education), German Jews were still significantly inhibited by government regulation. Many southern and western German cities still had restrictions on Jewish residence. The harshest laws were in Bavaria. Starting in 1813, the government capped the number of Jews in each town and required Jewish communities to keep a *Matrikel*, or list of residents; only if a place became vacant on that list could another Jew – even one born there – take up residence in the town. The *Matrikel* was in place until 1861.[6]

Jews in Poznań finally became citizens in the wake of the anti-monarchical revolution of 1848. Jews in Bohemia and Moravia were freed of marriage restrictions in 1849, though not until 1867 did the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian empire affirm basic Jewish political rights. Whipsawed for more than half a century between competing political forces, Jews only attained full legal emancipation in Germany with unification in 1871. By the end of the nineteenth century, German Jewry had developed into an economically successful and acculturated middle class. But throughout the century, Jews struggled against economic and legal hardships to take advantage of the opportunities of modernization and struggled within their own communities to figure out how to live as modern Jews.[7]

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[6] Sachar, Course of Modern Jewish History, 115; Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 15-16; Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 1.

[7] Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, 531; Wilma Abeles Iggers, ed., The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 59-60.

The basic pattern of Jewish life in the early nineteenth century was similar throughout Central Europe. The Jewish population was distributed unevenly: about 65,000 in Poznań and East Prussia; about 50,000 in Hesse, the Rhein Valley, and especially the Franconian provinces of Bavaria; between 500,000 and 600,000 in the Hapsburg Empire; and at least 25,000 in Alsace. As Europe began to modernize, Jews in all of these areas encountered, to different degrees, new challenges to their survival skills. The inheritance of this adaptation was brought to the Ohio River Valley by young German and Alsatian Jewish immigrants.[8]

Having historically been forbidden residence in cities, European Jews in the early nineteenth century were concentrated in small towns and villages, in small communities (under 300 Jews) where they often constituted 10-25% of the population. Within their close-knit societies, Jews were socially and religiously conservative. They spoke regional dialects of Yiddish, gave their children basic Jewish educations (though with different content and expectations for boys and girls), and were generally unacquainted with – and initially not particularly interested in – the modern secular culture developing across Europe.[9]

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[8] These numbers are approximations for 1815. In the early nineteenth century, more than half of France's Jews lived in Alsace; before the French Revolution, almost all did. Though politically French, Alsace was culturally close to Germany; it had been acquired by France from Germany in 1648. Alsatian Jews were closely connected economically, culturally, and familially with village Jews under German rule on the other side of the Rhein. Barkai, Branching Out, 1; Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 16; Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), vol. 13: 890. The term "German Jews" is of course somewhat indeterminate before 1871, when there came into existence a single political entity called "Germany." The term is usually applied to Jews in what is now Germany.

[9] Some 90% of German Jews lived in villages where a Jewish population of under 300 made up 10-25% of the total population. Alsatian Jews lived in some 200 villages, in communities of 100-300. In most villages, they accounted for just 5-10% of the total population; in only about 20 was it as much as 15-25%. This was a relatively high concentration, since Jews in German lands were only about 1% of the population, and in Alsace about 3%. In Poznań, because of residential restrictions, less than 5% of Jews lived in rural villages; the rest were in small towns and cities, where they were often one-third to one-half of the population. Jews in the Austrian Empire were concentrated in the small towns of Bohemia, Moravia,

Their occupations were those plied by their ancestors, mostly variations on peddling and petty trade, though a significant percentage of Poznań &Jews were artisans. Up to 20% of Alsatian Jews were middlemen for farmers, brokering agricultural products and livestock. Cattle-dealing was a characteristic occupation; in fact, Jews "virtually controlled" the livestock trade and butchering. Earning a living involved all members of the family; Jewish women were used to taking part in commerce. Some Jews could not earn a living at all, with up to 20% subsisting as itinerant *Betteljuden*, "beggar Jews."[10]

For the bulk of the *Dorfjuden* (village Jews), emancipation was largely a condition with only potential, not immediate, advantages. The word "emancipation" suggests a liberation that was only part of the picture: the acquisition of citizenship was accompanied by the disintegration of internal Jewish communal self-government, and the ability to move beyond inherited restrictions was soured by government requirements of conformity to new social patterns. Christian Europe was not interested in "multiculturalism." It was interested in "improving" Jews to the point of fitness for citizenship, and the strategies for "improvement" were not far from blackmail. To gain acceptance, Jews were expected to abandon traditional commercial occupations for more "normal" and "productive" ones such as agriculture and artisanry, and to dispense with

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Galicia, Slovakia, and Hungary. (Diner, Time for Gathering, 9-10, 29-32; Steven M. Lowenstein, The Mechanics of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 135; Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 12; Julian Bartys, "Grand Duchy of Poznań under Prussian Rule: Changes in the Economic Position of the Jewish Population, 1815-1848," Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 17: 193-94.) For descriptions of Jewish life in these societies, see Daniel Stauben, Scenes of Jewish Life in Alsace (n.p.: Jos. Simon Pangloss Press, 1991), a reprint of stories originally published in 1857-1859; Iggers, ed., Jews of Bohemia and Moravia; and Werner Cahnmann, "Village and Small Town Jews in Germany: A Typological Study," Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 19: 107-130 (which specifically includes the Jews of Alsace as well).

[10] Stauben, Scenes of Jewish Life in Alsace, xiii-xiv. He says that livestock was slaughtered according to Jewish law, so that Jews could eat it, but that Christians also bought it "without a second thought." For Poznań's artisans, see Bartys, "Grand Duchy of Poznań," 194. For women's economic role, see Diner, Time for Gathering, 11-13; Barkai, Branching Out, 3. For *Betteljuden*, see Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 19.

the primitive "Orientalism" of their religious practices in order to make Judaism a Western religion – and, presumably, eventually to convert to Christianity. When given the chance, Jews took up the challenge to adapt to government demands while retaining their own values and sense of identity – a perennial task, but now with the new dimension of expanded opportunities in some arenas. Developing in this context of give-and-take, the modernization of German and Alsatian Jewry was slow, uneven, and subject to a host of complex influences.[11]

Various aspects of life were subject to the dialectical process of modernization. Throughout the 1820s, German states attempted to enforce Jewish acculturation by making secular German elementary education compulsory for Jewish children. Jews adapted the requirement to their own needs by starting their own schools which, while significantly different from traditional *hedarim* (not least in that they taught in German rather than Yiddish), still included Jewish religious instruction. In Alsace also, new opportunities for secular elementary education in the 1830s and 1840s expanded literacy for both males and females. German education accelerated the disuse of Yiddish, though there was by no means a wholesale abandonment of the language. Likewise, Alsatian Jews only slowly adopted French as their primary language.[12]

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[11] Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 10; Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 8; Diner, Time for Gathering, 29-30. The ideological specifics of Jewish religious reform will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

[12] Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 11-12 (re education), 13-16 (re language); Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 99-108 (re education), 65-68 (re language). The *heder* was the elementary school for basic instruction in Judaism. Better students would go on to *yeshiva*, an advanced school for Talmud studies. Girls traditionally received far less education; they were generally taught a bit of Hebrew and Yiddish reading in separate schools or by tutors, often using specially-edited texts for women. In this period, Jews began to attend secular secondary schools in disproportionate numbers, and *yeshiva* education declined rapidly. The Encyclopedia Judaica (16:790-798) has a very helpful article on the varieties of Yiddish. For some examples of dialect, see Freddy Raphaël's essay "Les 'Landsjéde': Les Juifs de la campagne alsacienne," in Jean-Michel Boehler, Dominique Lerch and Jean Vogt, eds., Histoire de l'Alsace rurale (Strasbourg: Librarie Istra, 1983), 434-44. Germanization was an issue for Jews in Poznań; those who used German names and language were given a higher citizenship status (Bartys, "Grand Duchy of Poznań," 197-98).

Jews also effectively resisted the demands of many emancipation laws regarding their occupations. In the early nineteenth century, almost all German Jews were petty tradesmen, peddlers or agricultural produce brokers without fixed places of business, and most remained in trade. Their resistance to the pressure to become artisans or farmers was ultimately a boon. Jewish emancipation was simultaneous with the industrialization of Europe, when the officially-promoted "productive" occupations of agriculture and crafts were losing status and commerce was gaining in importance. Jews, who had never been able to own land, were able to deploy their liquid capital into investment in the new economy; the familiar and the new were synthesized as Jews became shopkeepers, wholesalers, and manufacturers.[13]

Other arenas of change showed slow and irregular patterns. Religious reform was either encouraged or discouraged by government intervention, and the Jewish community, itself divided on the idea, had to find its path within those parameters. The Bavarian government at first encouraged reform, with the idea that this might make Jews more "normal" (i.e., like Christians), but suppressed it in the 1840s. The opposite happened in Prussia, where an 1823 edict made Jewish religious reform illegal and an 1844 repeal of the law made it possible. Within the German Jewish community, religious reform was not solely an urban phenomenon. In the 1820s and 1830s, some communities' schools came under the influence of reform-minded teachers, and many small cities were sites of liturgical experiments in the 1830s and 1840s. Many more communities experimented with changes to synagogue aesthetics and decorum. The most widespread changes were modest: the introduction of German-language sermons and

[13] Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 19-22; Diner, Time for Gathering, 11; Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 12-13, 34, 39, 59-60.

formal choral (though not instrumental) music. Generally, though, religious reform left many *Dorfjuden* lightly or not at all touched until after 1850. In France, Judaism was regulated through a state religious structure of *consistoires* that already included Catholics and Protestants. The local Jewish *consistoires*, dominated by the laity, were the site of much communal controversy as rural Alsatians in particular resisted efforts at religious modernization promoted by the urban Jewish elites of Paris and other cities.[14]

This, then, was the cultural baggage that the German and Alsatian Jews brought to America, to the Ohio River Valley. Modernization created changes that enabled young Jews to consider the possibility of a life different from that of their grandparents and even their parents. But European economic, social and political conditions continued to create enormous obstacles to realizing those possibilities. Legal emancipation, it turned out, was no guarantee of acceptance by Gentiles, or even of fair treatment. Even the mundane ambition to marry and have a family was frustrated for young Bavarian Jews by the *Matrikel*.

One option available to Jews in some regions was migration to the city, particularly a growing regional city. Alsatians moved to Strasbourg or Colmar, German Jews to regional centers like Nürnberg and Stuttgart. But the large-scale urbanization of

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[14] Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 85-107. German governments took whichever course they felt had the greatest potential to weaken Judaism. See also Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 181-91. Traditional Jewish law forbids the playing of musical instruments on Sabbath and holidays. Re Alsace: Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 8, 75. The consistory system organized all the institutions of each religion into a national structure, with local representatives sitting in a sort of congress to deal with community issues. This centralization of religious life certainly made it more amenable to government oversight and regulation. A good description of the Jewish *consistoires* as loci of conflicts over cultural change is found in Phyllis Albert, The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977). Baden-Württemberg also had a consistory system, a legacy of Napoleonic rule.

Jews took place only after 1870, and until then, most Jews remained in smaller towns and villages.[15]

There was another option for poor and frustrated young Jews. Increasing thousands of Europeans were crossing the Atlantic to the United States; millions were reading and talking about the place. Did it make sense to wait in Europe for equality and opportunity, given the inconsistency and ambivalence of European governments and the persistent antisemitism of European populations? Or did it make sense to take advantage of the new option: life in America? For many, emigration would be their "substitute for emancipation."[16]

Between 1830 and 1914, over 200,000 Jews from German-speaking lands entered the United States, primarily from Bavaria and Poznań&. The earlier decades, 1820-1840, were dominated by Bavarians and Bohemians, the two groups totalling some 25,000; smaller numbers came from Baden-Württemberg. The emigration from Poznań &began in earnest in the 1830s, as Prussian economic policies put pressure on small merchants. An estimated 20,000 Jews immigrated from that province and from neighboring West Prussia between 1840 and 1860, mostly in the 1850s. Because migration to cities was an option available to Alsatian Jews sooner than to Germans, fewer – primarily the rural poor – were drawn off to the United States. They were propelled by a combination of economic, legal, political and social factors, which operated on each individual's decision

[15] Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 86-97; Josef Fraenkel, ed., The Jews of Austria (London: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1967), 361-73; Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 22-23.

[16] Barkai, p.11. Diner has a fascinating discussion of how and what European Jews learned about America (Time for Gathering, 37-42).

in a personal way. The bottom line, however, was the untenability of continued Jewish life in Europe; as Hasia Diner puts it, "The **vast** majority left their homes for America because in Europe they could neither work nor marry" [her emphasis].[17]

The Central European Jewish immigration was largely poor, young, single, and male. But though most migrants were poor, they were not the poorest Jews – the *Betteljuden* – who had the least means to plan and execute such a journey. Often, the migrants were younger sons of a lower-but-up-and-coming middle class, with some secular and Jewish education and usually a trade or experience in a family business. Families with small children were always part of the mix, as were single women, though young women were often followers rather than leaders in a family or village chain migration. Chain migrations of families were often necessary because, unlike Gentiles, Jews did not have land they could sell to finance a voyage. Someone had to go to America first and earn the money for the rest to follow. Typically, the most employable was sent first, followed by his younger teenage brothers, and then their sisters. Only a few Jews were truly political refugees fleeing in the aftermath of the failures of the revolutions of 1848, and until later in the century only a few of the intelligentsia – who

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[17] Diner, Time for Gathering, 43. The major factors in the analysis of migration are "push" (forces that impel emigration), "pull" (forces which draw migrants away), and "means" (the ability to leave, to travel, and to enter a new area). These "Laws of Migration" – more properly "tendencies" – are discussed in Roger Daniels, Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life (New York: Harper, 1991), 16-22. Re specific migrations: Barkai, Branching Out, 9-10, 15-16; Bartys, "Grand Duchy of Poznań," 200-202; Hyman, Jews of Alsace, 87, 156. For Alsace, see also Albert, The Modernization of French Jewry. Hyman (87) also notes that "there are no systematic studies of general Alsatian migration in this period" and gives no estimate of the number of Alsatian Jewish immigrants to the U.S. She does say that some 14,000 Christian Alsatians came between 1828 and 1837. There are really no good statistics available for the number of Jewish emigrants.

might very well disdain antebellum America's philistinism in contrast with Europe – immigrated.[18]

Non-Jewish Europeans were of course also migrating in large numbers as populations soared and traditional farm economies collapsed. But though Jewish migration was contemporaneous with non-Jewish migration, it was a different phenomenon. Jews, emphasizes Hasia Diner, "migrated for distinctly Jewish reasons," and the pressure of those unique reasons is reflected in immigration statistics. Jews were 4% of the total number of Germans who immigrated to the United States between 1830 and 1914, though they made up only about 1% of the German population. Jews, though only 1.5% of Bavaria's population, made up 5% of its emigrants; four times as many Jews as non-Jews left Poznań&. Whereas the Jews were poor, young, and single, non-Jewish immigrants were often landowning middle-class families, selling their farms in Europe to take up larger farms in the United States.[19]

It may have been easier for young Jews to uproot themselves than it was for non-Jewish Germans who lived on the land. Though restricted in their residence, Jews had many connections to other communities through business and family. As Lowenstein points out, "In South Germany peddlers and agricultural middlemen traveled from village to village, buying and selling whatever they could, and often returning home only once a week . . . . Hard as this type of life could be, it broadened the geographic horizons of

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[18] Barkai, Branching Out, 17-36; Bertram Korn, "Jewish '48'ers in America," American Jewish Archives 2 (June 1949): 3-20. Before the 1830s, a few Jews had paid their way to America as indentured servants; some communities would even pay for emigration of poor transients in order to be rid of them.

[19] Barkai, Branching Out, 9-10; Diner, Time for Gathering, 55-56.

Jews in a way not available to non-Jews, not even to the more stationary non-Jewish storekeeper." Experience left Jews better prepared for migration.[20]

Avraham Barkai argues that, "In more than one sense, American Jewry of the nineteenth century, up to the 1880s, can be regarded as a branch of German Jewry, at various stages along its route toward defining its own identity." Just as individual immigrants brought their German or Alsatian inheritance to their American experience, the American Jewish community built on European foundations during the German immigration. The Jews who came to America in the second quarter of the nineteenth century were poor, marginally educated, and culturally unsophisticated. They had been brought up in traditional societies that were beginning to feel their way into modernity. But changing circumstances shaped their development in an American direction. The sons and daughters who left home were never the same. [21]

The Jews who arrived in this wave of migrants from southern Germany and eastern France pioneered the mercantile frontier in the Ohio River Valley's small towns. They shared a common background: family life in small but Jewishly dense European towns and villages; a German or French secular education in a Jewish-run school; hearing Yiddish and speaking newly-acquired western languages; a role in the traditional Jewish commercial niche though perhaps in a new mode; possibly some passing exposure to new ideas of religious reform and to the battles about it; knowledge of new opportunities as Jews began to move to cities and abroad. Most important, they shared the European

[20] Lowenstein, Mechanics of Change, 136. Here Lowenstein is referring specifically to Jewish willingness to settle in cities once permitted to do so, but the observation also applies to emigration to and within the United States.

[21] Barkai, Branching Out, xi.

experience of Jewish "in-betweenness": between political emancipation and antisemitic repression; between ability and opportunity; between ambition and fulfillment.

Where did the Ohio River Valley Jewish settlers come from? Their hometowns were mostly under 2,000 residents with several hundred Jews constituting a significant proportion of the total population. For example, in Maroldsweisach in the Unterfranken province in Bavaria (home to Matthias Schloss and Mayer Seidenbach, who settled in Portsmouth, Ohio), Jews were one-quarter of the population in 1837, numbering 140 in a total population of 550. In Hainsfarth, in the Schwaben province in Bavaria, hometown of Simon Oberdorfer of Henderson, Kentucky, the 440 Jewish residents in 1837 were over a third (37.6%) of the town's 1,170 people. Likewise, Schmieheim, in Baden-Württemberg, hometown of Isaac Wolfe Bernheim of Paducah, Kentucky, and later of Louisville, was over one-third Jewish in 1825 (36.4%, or 325 of 893). Isaac Weil of Portsmouth grew up in the Baden-Württemberg town of Buttenhausen, where in 1827, Jews were more than half of the town (51.2% – 251 of 490).[22]

Many of these communities are known to have had Jewish community schools, established in the 1820s and 1830s, that provided at least primary secular educations in the German language. For example, Gunzenhausen's Jewish school opened in 1827 with 36 students from the local Jewish population of about 250; Sarah Seidenbach of

[22] Pinkas ha-kehilot: entsiklopedyah shel ha-yishuvim ha-Yehudim le-min hivasdam ve-ad le-αη9αρ Sho'at Μιλη9εμετ ha'Olam ha-Sheniyah [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad va-Shem, 1969-1996), vol. 2, pt. 1: 509 (Maroldsweisach) and 615-16 (Hainsfarth); vol. 2, pt. 2: 59 (Buttenhausen) and 506 (Schmieheim). Statistics on the decline of Jewish population in these towns shows the dramatic effects of migration to the cities and emigration to America. By 1890, Maroldsweisach, for example, had only 39 Jewish residents in a total population of 501; by 1910, Hainsfarth had only 91 in 999. Similar declines are evident in Schonungen, Unterfranken (Bavaria), home of Samuel Newberger of Parkersburg, West Virginia; Ichenhausen, Schwaben (Bavaria), home of Louis Ichenhauser of Evansville; and the Rhein-Pfalz town of Heppenheim, home of Abraham Stern of Portsmouth (Pinkas ha-kehilot, vol. 2, pt. 1: 576, 598; vol. 2, pt. 3: 183). The same was true in Alsace, but I have no specific case studies from the hometowns of Ohio River Valley Jews; Hyman (Jews of Alsace) gives specifics from other similar Jewish towns. Regrettably, Pinkas ha-kehilot does not include Alsace.

Portsmouth, Ohio, who was born in Gunzenhausen that year, probably attended in the 1830s.[23]

German Jewish immigrants in the Ohio River Valley were familiar with small town life, as a result of their own experiences, and with the idea of city life that had begun to infiltrate their towns. Like the Jews remaining in Germany, Ohio Valley Jews viewed both as options. Other aspects of their European experience would also shape their lives in America. In their new homeland, no stigma attached to engaging in the traditional Jewish economic role in trade. Despite some ambivalence about cities and commerce, based in romantic notions of the virtuous independent republican farmer, America generally not only welcomed commercial expertise but applauded and honored it. A German secular education, however minimal, provided basic skills of literacy and numeracy to help Jews into the middle class. But the experience of separateness within Germany continued to bind them to other Jews. Within that Jewish community, new expressions of Judaism grew from a strong inheritance of traditional Judaism and the glimmers of exposure to the notion of religious reform.[24]

And if their small Ohio River towns were not as thickly Jewish as their European homes, the Ohio River Valley as a region created a nurturing context and provided supports for the development of American Jewish identity.

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[23] Pinkas ha-kehilot, vol. 2, pt. 1: 290, 576, 615; vol. 2, pt. 2: 60. Parents who gave their daughters the traditionally marginal Jewish education were nevertheless willing to send them to secular schools when available. Paula Hyman describes the intriguing ramifications of this in Gender and Assimilation: The Roles and Representation of Women (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

[24] None of the identified hometowns was known to be involved with reform until the 1860s, when Buttenhausen was the site of some serious conflict over moderate vs. radical ideas (Pinkas ha-kehilot, vol. 2, pt. 2: 60).

## CHAPTER ONE: FROM EUROPE TO THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

With the influx of immigrants from German-speaking countries, the Jewish population of the United States mushroomed. From about 15,000 in 1840, it more than tripled in a decade to about 50,000 in 1850. By 1860, the numbers had increased again anywhere between 150% and 300%; that year there were at least 125,000 – and more like 150,000 or even 200,000 – Jews in the United States.[1]

Hasia Diner makes an important point when she describes how, in the nineteenth century, "Jewish dispersion and settlement in the United States moved along certain fairly standard patterns. So standard, indeed, that it is possible to delineate a paradigm for Jewish community development." Outside of those cities which had had Jewish communities since colonial times – New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, and Newport – the paradigm involved one or several young, single Jewish men establishing a store or stores (often after peddling or after one or two prior business

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[1] Jonathan Sarna, ed., The American Jewish Experience, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997), 359.

failures), bringing their brothers into the business as it grew, and then marrying, having children, and establishing Jewish communal life. Jews maintained regional and national networks of family, business, and religious connections, which supported their family formation, commercial progress, and religious life.[2]

But even though this story "happened **everywhere** that Jews showed up," Jews did not choose their places of settlement randomly. Cultural, social and economic factors guided their choices, and in the first half of the nineteenth century, there were very good reasons to choose the Ohio River Valley. One of those reasons was the growth of Cincinnati, which in the 1830s was the exemplar of America's urban energy in the West and home to an increasing number of Jewish permanent residents.[3]

Cincinnati's antebellum growth was directly related to its location on the Ohio River. From about 1820 through the 1850s, steamboat traffic made the city the "principal commercial center above New Orleans." Canals built in the 1820s and 1830s reinforced this role by easing the shipment of agricultural goods from the city's Miami Valley hinterland. Much of the city's prosperity, therefore, was related to its role as an agricultural center, with thriving pork-packing plants, woolen manufacture, and horse-marketing. Dominating the physical environment, the extent of the meat-packing industry earned Cincinnati the nickname "Porkopolis." Heavy industries such as iron soon developed, as did financial services: Cincinnati had the first state-chartered bank in Ohio and the first Ohio branch of the Bank of the United States. It was a center for the legal profession, science (with a medical college founded in 1819), publishing, literature,

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[2] Hasia Diner. A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 58-59.

[3] See 54-55 above. Quote from Diner, A Time for Gathering, 59 (her emphasis).

art, and music. It offered high-quality, progressive public education – even, after 1848, to its black citizens, though in a segregated system – and was home to a liberal Christian evangelical anti-slavery movement.[4]

In 1820, Cincinnati's total population was already 9,642; in 1840, it was 46,338; and 161,044 in 1860. Among those swelling the population were many German Jewish immigrants. In 1840, there had been only about 1,000-1,500 Jews in the city. In 1850, there were 2,500 or 3,000, and perhaps as many as 10,000 in 1860 – about 5 or 6 percent of the total population.[5]

Cincinnati's Jews were for the most part not directly involved in any of the principal industries of the city, but created a new one for a city "on the make" – the garment trade. By the 1850s, when the Singer sewing machine was introduced, Cincinnati manufactured more ready-made men's clothing than all other western cities combined, and this enterprise was dominated by German Jews. Involved in all aspects of the business – manufacture, distribution and sales – Jews virtually monopolized the wholesale segment, owning sixty-five of the city's seventy wholesale firms. Traditionally a favored Jewish occupation, the garment business by 1860 "supplied at least a portion of the livelihood for well over one-half of Cincinnati's Jews." It supplied the livelihood of many non-Jews as well, for Cincinnati garment manufacturers employed some 950 people in their factories and over 9000 home-based pieceworkers, mostly non-

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[4] George W. Knepper, Ohio and Its People (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 127-40, 148-57, 185-208.

[5] Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 472; Jacob Rader Marcus, To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 172-73. The Jewish numbers are problematic. Marcus lists estimates used by various sources without evaluation. He gives only one figure for 1840 (1,000-1,500) and for 1850 gives a range from 2,500 to 3,346. But for 1860, the range is 6,000 to 10,000, with a mean of 9,500.

Jewish women. Significant proportions of the Jewish community made their living in other traditionally Jewish occupations, especially dry goods, liquor, and cigar-making.[6]

In the antebellum era, Louisville and Pittsburgh also established themselves as important river cities and began to attract Jewish populations, though lagging behind Cincinnati in this respect. With fewer than 400 residents in 1800, Louisville was not even the largest city in Kentucky (inland Lexington was) until the steamboat boom of the 1820s lifted its population from 4,012 in 1820 to 11,345 in 1830. In the 1830s, there were about fifteen adult Jewish men in Louisville and by the mid-1840s, several dozen families. In 1860, Louisville's total population of 68,033 was still less than half of Cincinnati's; the Jewish population of something over 1,000 was a substantial increase over earlier years, but still far behind Cincinnati. Competing with Cincinnati for river trade, Louisville was evidently also less competitive as a desirable Jewish destination; Jews heading for the central Ohio River Valley would find more reasons to go to the Ohio city than the Kentucky one a hundred miles downstream.[7]

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[6] Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience/HUC-JIR, 1989), 38; Francis P. Weisenburger, The Passing of the Frontier: 1825-1850, vol. 3 of A History of the State of Ohio (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1941), 85. According to Stephen G. Mostov ("A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio: The Social and Economic History of Cincinnati's Jewish Community, 1840-1875," Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1981, 112), 43% of Cincinnati Jews were in the apparel and dry goods businesses in both 1850 and 1860. The total figure of 85% in mercantile trades is high even compared to Jews in other cities in the mid-nineteenth century, though of the six cities he cites, all but one had close to or over 80% of its Jewish population in mercantile trades (107). For historical background of Jewish involvement in the liquor and tobacco trades, see H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed., A History of the Jewish People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 642, 739.

[7] Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, A New History of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 99-103; Lewis N. Dembitz, "Jewish Beginnings in Kentucky," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 1 (1893): 100; Marcus, To Count a People, 77, 172; Ira Rosenwaike, "The First Jewish Settlers in Louisville," Filson Club History Quarterly 53 (January 1979), 37-44. There were three men surnamed Levi in the 1831 Louisville directory, Dembitz notes, but they were all (in his words) "half-breeds" brought up as Christians. He identifies the later arrivals as Polish families from Charleston, S.C., and several from southern Germany. Marcus cites sources which say there were 2,000 Jews in Louisville in 1860, but another scholar says that number is "highly exaggerated" (Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 [New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994], 72).

Pittsburgh was even slower in its Jewish development. As America's frontier shifted to the Midwest in the antebellum era, the city's geographical advantages decreased relative to river cities farther west, like Cincinnati, or those on the Great Lakes, like Cleveland and Chicago. It did maintain its position as a regional center for agricultural processing and distribution and for industries based on local mining. As a result, Pittsburgh's population grew substantially: from 1,565 in 1800 to over 12,000 in 1830 and almost 75,000 in 1860. But though much of this increase was due to immigration (41% of the 1850 population was immigrant), very few of the immigrants were Jewish. In 1839, there were only five Jewish men in the city, and in 1850, only about thirty-five. The total for 1860 was probably around 350 or 400 individuals.[8]

In the reckoning of one local Jewish historian, Pittsburgh's developmental lag was related to the importance of water transportation generally and the Ohio River specifically. Cincinnati, by dominating the Ohio, and Cleveland, by dominating the eastern Great Lakes, gained significant Jewish population in the early nineteenth century because of the commercial attractiveness of their accessibility by water. Jewish travelers to Cincinnati used Pittsburgh merely as a point of embarkation, as did Joseph Jonas in 1817, or bypassed it completely via canals, as did Louis Stix in 1825. Only in the late 1840s, when several river improvements – locks and dams on the Ohio's feeders and better steamboats – were introduced did many Jews stay permanently. Virtually all the

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[8] Edward K. Muller, "Metropolis and Region: A Framework for Inquiry into Western Pennsylvania," in Samuel P. Hays., ed., City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 185-88; Jacob Feldman, The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History, 1755-1945 (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986), 9, 15-30.

few Jewish families in Pittsburgh made their livings from retail, especially dry goods and clothing.[9]

So while the river cities of the Ohio River Valley were clearly attractive to the German Jewish immigrants, not all cities were equally so, and in the river economy, smaller towns, especially those on the north bank of the upper Valley, also held some promise. The 1833 Ohio Gazetteer listed four river towns – Steubenville, Marietta, Gallipolis, and Portsmouth, in addition to the city of Cincinnati – as among the state's major centers. In 1840, only three Indiana towns had populations over 2500, and two of these – Madison and New Albany – were on the Ohio (third was the state capital of Indianapolis). Ten years later, these were still the three largest towns in Indiana, with New Albany's population at 8,181 population and Madison's at 8,012. Two other Ohio River towns, Evansville (population 3,235) and Lawrenceburg (population 2,651), had also grown to prominence in the state.[10]

On the south bank of the Ohio, the northwestern Virginia city of Wheeling grew by leaps and bounds in the antebellum years, from 1,500 in 1820 to 5,000 in 1830 and over 9,000 in 1840. In 1860, with a population of 16,000, Wheeling was the second-largest city in the state, trailing only the state capital of Richmond.[11]

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[9] Feldman, Western Pennsylvania, 9, 11, 15-30.

[10] William Alexander Mabry, "Industrial Beginnings in Ohio," Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 55 (July-September 1946): 250-53; James Madison, The Indiana Way: A State History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 95-96.

[11] John Alexander Williams, West Virginia: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 50.

The river economy invigorated smaller places as well by integrating them into regional markets. "Small Ohio towns along the river became ports during the steamboat era," an Ohio historian explains. "Scarcely a hamlet was too small to be served by a freight hauler or by the small craft which carried coal and other cargo from place to place." Once again taking advantage of opportunities provided by market expansion, Jewish immigrants from the German-speaking countries began to settle in small towns along the Ohio River and to try their hands at business in what seemed to be promising environments. By 1860, Jews were widely – though not evenly – settled in the Valley, on both northern and southern banks, in towns of all sizes.[12]

The late Jacob Rader Marcus, founder of the field of American Jewish history, was fond of saying that there is no such thing as "the first Jew" anywhere – there was always someone there earlier. This was, of course, a hyperbolic way of pointing out the difficulty of making such assignments. There was no "first" until one or more Jews settled in a town and stayed long enough to be captured by a census or other vital record, to be listed in a city directory, or to appear in a newspaper story or business advertisement.[13]

In large part, the difficulty in identifying "firsts" is that many German Jewish men were itinerant peddlers as their first occupation on arriving in America. Peddling as an integral part of retail distribution was pioneered in the late eighteenth century by New England Yankees. As westward expansion coincided with central European immigration

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[12] Quote from Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 148.

[13] Quote from Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 24.

after 1830, the New Englanders' dominance waned; in one historian's colorful phrase, "As the mantle of the westward traveling Yankee was discarded, it was snatched up by the Jewish immigrant."[14]

Most of these Jewish peddlers were men aged 18 to 25, who peddled for less than five years, forming and re-forming partnerships with relatives or landsmen. The staples of their trade were clothing, dry goods, and notions – needles, thread, buttons, lace, ribbons, etc. As merchants, they were the outermost edge of a complex distribution system. East coast importers and wholesalers shipped goods to merchants and manufacturers in regional centers like Cincinnati, who in turn provided goods directly to peddlers, to local retail outlets, and to retail outlets in smaller towns (who also supplied peddlers as well as selling directly). Peddling was a particularly useful and viable business when a region's population was spread out in tiny villages and on isolated farms, yet within a few days' traveling distance of supply centers. A very small town might have a general store, but the supply of non-perishables like dry goods was most efficiently supplied through the peddler's occasional visit.[15]

In some communities, up to half of Jewish men were peddlers based in the town, but spending most of their time on the road selling to residents of villages and farms. The job required little, if any, capital, since goods were usually provided on assignment from a wholesaler, and the expansion of the American population into new areas meant there was always a need for men who could take the goods to the customers. The peddling life was a crash course in American culture, as the immigrant peddler struggled with the

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[14] Maxwell Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing: An Introduction to the Study of the Cincinnati Peddler," Jewish Quarterly Review 53 (April 1963): 306, 318-19.

[15] Barkai, Branching Out, 58-59.

English language and stayed overnight in the unfamiliar surroundings of whichever farm he happened to be near.[16]

Since peddlers spent most of their time on the road, tracing their earliest sojourns is difficult or impossible. Some who later became very successful left memoirs in which they identified the areas through which they peddled. Sometimes public records expose facets of this peripatetic life. A list of licenses issued to peddlers in Jefferson County (Steubenville), Ohio, in the 1840s and 1850s includes many Jewish men who later lived elsewhere in the Ohio Valley, especially in nearby Wheeling, West Virginia. Also on the list of licensees were Charles Coblenz, who later opened a store in Marietta, Ohio, and Joseph Dinkelspiel, who later lived in Marietta, in Madison, Indiana, and in Louisville, Kentucky. But many peddlers left no or insubstantial traces; their presence as a class may be prominent in descriptions of frontier life, but their individual lives slip through the fingers of posterity.[17]

One such peddler was Moses Frank, who died in Gallipolis, Ohio, in 1834. His birthplace, birth date and date of immigration are unknown, and the legal record of his estate lists no heirs. Both his personal effects and his business capital were included in the estate list, an odd assortment of property that included five silver watches, two beaver skins, seven sets of Catholic church ornaments, one buffalo robe, ten old vests, fifteen shirt collars, one gourd, one shotgun, one trunk, and assorted items of personal clothing.

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[16] Diner, Time for Gathering, 68; Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing," 312-13. Peddlers also engaged in door-to-door sales in the cities (Diner, Time for Gathering, 72).

[17] Mary E. Thomas, comp., "Licenses to Travelling Merchants, Boat Stores, and Pedlars in Ohio, Taken from Records in the Jefferson County Court House, Steubenville, Ohio," (Reynoldsburg, Ohio: Research Unlimited, n.d.). This data is examined in detail in a subsequent chapter. A Samuel and a Meyer Dinkelspiel are also on this list. Hasia Diner notes that most peddlers probably worked without licenses when possible, to avoid the costs (Time for Gathering, 67).

These belongings were all sold off to local merchants. Frank also left some cash in silver and gold coins, and a $1000 "draft on the bank of the United States payable in new York to Morris Franck" [sic], perhaps a credit issued to him by a New York merchant as an advance for purchasing a stock of merchandise.[18]

Other peddlers were "lost" in a different way. Hyman Lazarus was already forty years old when he immigrated from southern Germany in 1818. Basing himself in the river town of Marietta, Ohio, Lazarus sold throughout the area before opening a store in the tiny Muskingum River town of Malta, where he married a Christian woman, raised Christian children, and was eventually buried in a Christian cemetery.[19]

This phenomenon of widespread intermarriage was much more common in the early years of the German Jewish immigration, when young men frequently found themselves adrift in America without extended family or Jewish communal supports. As the immigration increased in both size and demographic diversity, there were not only more Jewish women with whom to form families, but more Jews with whom to build communities. The shift from peddling to store-keeping also fostered Jewish family and community stability.[20]

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[18] Estate of Moses (Morris) Frank, Journal and Wills Book, Volume D, p. 163, Gallia County (Ohio) Probate Court. Presumably the proceeds from the sale, which netted about half of the appraised value of the property, went to the state.

[19] Richard Warren Welch, "The Assimilation of an Ethnic Group – The German-Jewish Peddlers in the Upper Ohio Valley, 1790-1840: A Study in Historical Geography," Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1972, passim. Hyman Lazarus was Welch's great-great-grandfather. David Philipson ("The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 8 [1900]): 43-44) and Lewis Dembitz ("Jewish Beginnings," 8) knew of many Jewish men with similar life stories.

[20] Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," Jewish Social Studies 7 (April 1945): 121-23. This shift replicated the career trajectories of Yankee peddlers, who established stores with fixed locations as frontier populations became denser and transportation more accessible.

As in other forms of commerce, the Ohio River and its tributaries were the lifeline of Jewish peddling, providing easy transportation of goods. The peddlers' business also infused energy into the river towns; since east coast cities like New York and Philadelphia were not accessible wholesale markets for the trans-Appalachian region, the new wholesale centers like Cincinnati and Louisville supplied the demand. As Rudolf Glanz points out, "the peddler had to continue looking for new settlements with which to do business before anybody had a chance to establish there a fixed store." As populations grew and concentrated, many Jewish peddlers decided that they might as well be that first storekeeper, or at least among the first. By mid-century, Jews lived in numerous river towns; almost all of them were merchants, a large majority in the dry goods business. Wheeling, Virginia, had a Jewish population of several dozen before 1850. At least two Jewish families were in Evansville, Indiana, in the late 1830s, and at least two men lived in Owensboro, Kentucky by the 1840s. In the 1850s, Jewish merchants appeared in Lawrenceburg, Aurora, New Albany and Mount Vernon, Indiana; Ironton, Marietta, Bellaire and Steubenville, Ohio; Paducah, Kentucky; Parkersburg, Virginia; and several towns of southern Illinois, including Cairo, Golconda, and Metropolis. In many cases, the evidence for these "firsts" is also the evidence of their concern to maintain Jewish connections, by subscribing to Jewish newspapers such as the Israelite, published in Cincinnati.[21]

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[21] Quote from Glanz, "Early Jewish Peddling," 126. Barkai (Branching Out, 45) warns – realistically – against over-emphasizing peddling, which was, after all, a temporary occupation for most who engaged in it. A survey of the city directories for Portsmouth, Ohio, in 1858 and 1864 shows that virtually **all** Jews were in mercantile lines, mostly clothing and dry goods, but also groceries (including one butcher), cigars, and liquor. Only a family which ran a saloon was not technically "mercantile," but rather in a service industry (Williams' Portsmouth Directory, City Guide, and Business Mirror, Volume I, 1858-59 [Portsmouth: James Stephenson, 1858]; Williams' Portsmouth City Directory for 1864-5 [Portsmouth: Stephenson & Patterson, 1864]).

For some up-and-coming peddlers, the small river towns were stepping-stones to careers in the cities. This was the case with Jacob Elsas, whose rise to wealth and reputation in Cincinnati contrasts markedly with Moses Frank's lonely ending in Gallipolis. Elsas was born near Stuttgart, Germany, in 1818, and came to the United States at the age of 20. Setting out from Philadelphia, he peddled throughout Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio, before opening a dry-goods store in Portsmouth, Ohio, in 1842. Elsas's business success was substantially aided by his marriage into the Fechheimer family, originally from Mitwitz, Bavaria. Either in Philadelphia or Cincinnati, Elsas met the Fechheimer brothers, "a distinguished group of peddlers," in the description of one historian, and in 1845, he married their niece Jeannette. In 1848, Elsas closed his Portsmouth store to merge his business with that of

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For early Jews in Wheeling, see Rabbi Harry Levi, "A Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim, Wheeling, West Va." (Wheeling: Bullard Printing House, 1899). The Gumberts and Heiman families settled in Evansville ("100th Anniversary, Washington Avenue Temple, 1857-1957," Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville – Nearprint File, American Jewish Archives [henceforth AJA]). Two Jews who settled in Owensboro were Marcus Suntheimer and Samuel Moise. Paducah's pioneer Jewish families were those of Morris and Abraham Uri, D. Loewenstein, and Leopold Klaw. Morris Kahn was in Golconda: Bernard Baer and Lehman Tannhauser in Metropolis. For these communities, see Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah, Ky.: Temple Israel, 1912), 14-22. Henry and Leon Adler settled in Lawrenceburg (History of Dearborn, Ohio and Switzerland Counties, Indiana [Chicago: Weakley, Harraman & Co., 1885], 259). Mt. Vernon's early Jewish residents were Moses and Daniel Rosenbaum, Levi Hartung, David and Louis Mendel, Sampson Oberdorfer, and Emanuel Wolf. See Bernheim, Jews in Paducah, 17, and W.P. Leonard, History and Directory of Posey County ( Evansville: A.C. Isaacs, 1882 [Reprint, 1974]), [unpaged]. Charles and Solomon Coblenz became citizens while living in Marietta. See Journal of Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, Ohio, v. 10, p. 214, entry dated September 11, 1845. The first burial in Jewish section of Cairo's Villa Ridge cemetery was that of Harmon Rosenwater in 1853. Isaac Walder had a clothing store at the corner of Sixth St. and Ohio Levee in Cairo by at least 1857. See letter from Irene Hodge to Al Cohen of State Historical Records survey, October 18, 1939 (Cairo, IL, SC-206, folder 1, AJA). Samuel Newberger settled in Parkersburg around 1853 (Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958, Vols. I-III [n.p., 1963], 1127). For Bellaire, see "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling [WV]," prepared by L[arry] Good, 1989, SC-12958, AJA. Subscribers to the Israelite included the Wise brothers in Ironton, A. Epstein in Aurora, and E. Frohman and Frederic Gutman in Steubenville: Israelite 1 (September 8, 1854): 72; 1 (September 22, 1854): 1 (February 2, 1855): 240. J. Levinson of New Albany subscribed to the Occident (see 13 [April-May 1855]). For a survey of the distribution of Jewish periodicals as evidence of patterns of Jewish settlement, see Rudolf Glanz, "Where the Jewish Press was Distributed in Pre-Civil War America," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly 5:1 (October 1972), 1-14.

his wife's family in Cincinnati, where he was a successful merchant and an important leader in both the Jewish and general communities. Numbers of other men later quite prominent in Cincinnati's Jewish community had followed the same path.[22]

But increasingly, Jewish immigrants found it congenial to stay permanently in smaller towns. Twenty years after Jacob Elsas began his business in Portsmouth, brothers Leopold and John Eisman chose the town, already home to a dozen Jewish families, to develop theirs. The Eismans were Bavarians, born in Forchheim, in the Oberfranken (Upper Franconia) province, Leopold in 1834 and John in 1839. Leopold came to the United States at age 26 in 1860, bringing his younger brother a year later. For two years, they peddled from different home bases – New York City, then New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Parkersburg, West Virginia. In 1863, Leopold opened a men's clothing store in Portsmouth in partnership with Morris Friedman of Cincinnati; John came into the business a few years later. Within a few years, both brothers were married to local Jewish women: Leopold to Fannie Ronsheim (whose family, like the Fechheimers, was from Mitwitz), and John to Fannie Meyer and, after her early death, to

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[22] Biographical sketch of Jacob Elsas in Vorstands-Bericht des Deutschen Pionier-Vereins von Cincinnati, Ohio (Cincinnati: G. Rosenthal & Co., 1892), photocopy in Biographies File, AJA. He retired independently wealthy by 1870 (Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 100). Quote re Fechheimers from Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing," 314. Fechheimer family papers show the continuity of the Jewish presence in petty trade. Samuel Maier, the grandfather of the Cincinnati-based brothers, sold clothing door-to-door in the neighborhood of Mitwitz, in the mid- and late-eighteenth century. Their father Meyer had fourteen children, including nine sons; one son, Moses, stayed in Mitwitz to operate a dry goods store, but other family members began their exodus to the United States in the early 1830s. Marcus and Selig came to Cincinnati, as did Moses' daughters Jeannette and Sophia. Solomon settled in a small Kentucky town, while his sons moved to Cincinnati to join their uncle Marcus in the business he had established in 1842 with the Goldsmith Brothers (Fechheimer Family – Nearprint File and Genealogies File, AJA). The Fechheimer Brothers Company found a stable niche in the garment industry; still based in Cincinnati, it specializes in uniforms for police, firefighters, postal workers, and marching bands ("Fechheimer Bros. Co. – A 150 Year Old Legacy," pamphlet, 1992, Fechheimer Family – Nearprint File, AJA). Discussing Cincinnati merchants, Whiteman ("Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing," 310-18) mentions by name, in addition to Elsas, Philip Heidelbach, Henry Mack, Jacob Seasongood, the Fechheimer brothers, Bernhard Barbe, Philip Bamberger, Moritz Loth, and Gustav Lowenstein – all former peddlers in the Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana backcountry.

Eliza Dryfuss. The families lived out their lives in Portsmouth, active in the Jewish community; Leopold died in 1886, Eliza in 1892, and John in 1913.[23]

The shift from peddling to shop-keeping was critical to the transformation of German Jewish immigrants into an American middle class. In Europe, Jews, forced into trade, suffered from Christians' traditional bias against commerce. In antebellum America, however, commerce was not simply tolerated, but honored. In Hasia Diner's trenchant formulation, "the very economic behavior that had made [Jews] pariahs in Alsace, Bavaria, Posen, and Bohemia made them solid, respectable citizens in an America that admired the self-made businessman." America's economic expansion provided considerable opportunity for peddlers who were intelligent, worked hard – and had a certain amount of good luck.[24]

America lauded the man who, in the famous metaphor, pulled himself up by his own bootstraps; as a matter of cultural habit, self-employment was **the** goal for central European Jewish immigrants. An honored position as a self-made businessman in the life of a small river town provided security for immigrant German Jewish men, and nurtured a bourgeois identity for German-Jewish families. If not everyone could be a Jacob Elsas or Marcus Fechheimer, pre-eminent in the business and Jewish communal life of a major city, an equivalent status was attainable – as it was for Leopold and John Eisman – in the

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[23] History of Lower Scioto Valley, Ohio (Chicago: Interstate Publishing Co., 1884), 259-60. They may have had relatives in Parkersburg. Fannie Meyer Eisman died at the age of 20 on December 24, 1870, probably after a difficult childbirth; Portsmouth's Jewish cemetery also has a plot for Moritz Eisman, born on December 16, 1870 and dead before the age of six months. For death dates, see Greenlawn Cemetery census, Portsmouth, Ohio, compiled by Caryn Shoemaker, 1983, Ohio Historical Society.

[24] Diner, A Time for Gathering, 85 (quote); Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing," 308, 318; Glanz, "Early Jewish Peddling," 120.

smaller city or town. The small Ohio River towns provided a context for their development of Jewish community, with unique choices and challenges.

As clearly exemplified by the career of Jacob Elsas, a critically important factor in Jewish economic success in the nineteenth-century United States was the structure of mutual supports created by the conjunction of economic and family relations. Regional networks of Jewish peddlers were proto-communities: in cities and towns, obtaining credit and accumulating supplies and stock, or on the road, the activities of peddling created connections between and among individuals and groups. They might meet at regional supply houses or hotels, preferably those run by Jewish merchants, such as Dryfuss' Commercial Exchange and Eating Saloon in Portsmouth, Ohio. As "the fraternity of peddlers was united through both business and marriage," the groundwork was laid for organized Jewish communal life. These networks of kinship and business functioned simultaneously as mechanisms of dispersal and cohesion, helping populate the Ohio River Valley with Jews while linking them into a regional community.[25]

Especially in the early years of community formation, it was not unusual to find in specific American towns concentrations of *landsleute*, Jewish settlers from a specific European town. Significant examples were Cincinnati, which absorbed most of the young Jews of Demmelsdorf, Bavaria, and Cleveland, destination for most migrants from Unsleben, Bavaria. In both these cases, these migrant groups were composed of several core families. In the more expansive usage of the term *landsmann*, to cover regions with

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[25] Diner, Time for Gathering, 66-69; Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing," 309, 315 (quote). Dryfuss' establishment listed in Williams' Portsmouth City Directory for 1864-5 (Portsmouth: Stephenson & Patterson, 1864).

many Jewish towns, or even entire provinces, the concentrations were even more noticeable. Before the Civil War, over half of Cincinnati's Jews were from Bavaria, and half of these – or more than one-quarter of all Cincinnati Jews – were from the Oberfranken (Upper Franconia) province. Through use of communal supports, the Oberfrankener Jews became the most successful and stable businesspeople in the city.[26]

Among the small towns on the Ohio River, Gallipolis, Ohio, stands out as a remarkable example of the *landsleute* phenomenon. As the name – "city of the Gauls" – suggests, the town was founded on French immigration: a short-lived settlement of refugees from the French Revolution organized, under dubious pretenses, by the Scioto Company in 1790. Though the original core of settlers dispersed, the town continued to attract French immigrants, and the first Jews in Gallipolis were also French, grouped around several Alsatian families: the Mochs, the Franks and the Emsheimers.[27]

The Moch family's home was the village of Schwindratzheim, about twelve miles north of Strasbourg and ten miles south of Hagenau. Three brothers, Moses, Elias, and Leopold arrived in the U.S. as teenagers in the late 1840s; six siblings remained in Europe. The brothers first settled in Cincinnati, coming to Gallipolis in the early 1850s. Sadly, young Leopold drowned in the Ohio River there in June 1854. Elias and Moses were soon joined in the United States, and in Gallipolis, by their first cousins, Emma and Abraham Moch, who grew up in the Alsatian village of Uhlwiller, about six miles north

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[26] Barkai, Branching Out, 72. Singular of plural *Landsleute* is *landsman*, a fellow-countryman or compatriot, someone from the same *land*. Re Cincinnati: Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 79, 231. As an example, the Fechheimers' hometown, Mitwitz, was in Oberfranken.

[27] Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 68-69. Several men connected with the settlement of Moses Frank's estate were French-born Christians (see Henrietta Evans and Mary P. Wood, eds., Death Notices, Obituaries and Marriage Notices Taken From the Gallia County, Ohio, Newspapers, from 1825 to 1875 [Gallipolis: Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, 1986]).

of Schwindratzheim. Emma and Elias were soon married. In 1862, Abraham married Rosa Baer of Cincinnati; soon after her death in 1876, Abraham, left with five children ages six through thirteen, married Amelia Blatt, who was also from Uhlwiller via Cincinnati.[28]

The five Frank siblings, a sister and four brothers, were all born near Strasbourg in the 1810s and 1820s. The eldest brother, Henry, led the way, immigrating in the early 1840s. In the late 1850s, the Franks and Mochs were joined in Gallipolis by the four Emsheimer brothers – John, Michael, Jacob, and Joseph – who came via Cincinnati. Perhaps the Franks and Emsheimers were related to the Mochs, or had probably come from the same village or area of Alsace. One Frank brother and one Moch brother ran a clothing store together in Gallipolis in the late 1860's. The Emsheimers hailed from the village of Soultz-sous-Forets, about nine miles north of Hagenau and less than twenty miles from the Mochs' village.[29]

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[28] Moch Family, Genealogies File, AJA. One Abraham Moch was the patriarch of one of the wealthiest Jewish families in eighteenth-century Alsace. However, there is no evidence that this family was related to the Gallipolis Mochs: there is no overlap of names or towns of residence in the Ohio family's genealogy. Perhaps when the Jews of Alsace took formal surnames in 1808, under Napoleon's orders, some chose Moch for its elite associations. Elias Moch was naturalized in 1855 and their son Albert was born in 1856. Naturalizations listed in Henrietta Evans and Mary P. Wood, eds., Early Gallia County Court Records, 1846-1899 (Gallipolis: Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society, 1984). See also Moch Family, Genealogies File, AJA, and Die Deborah 8 (September 5, 1862): 40.

[29] Evans and Wood, Early Gallia County Court Records, 1846-1899. All we know about the Franks' European origin is that they were born "near Strasbourg." The Frank siblings were Leah (m. Heineman) b. 1811, Henry b. 1812, Harry b. 1819, Leopold b. 1824, Moses b. sometime between 1825 and 1829 (Evans and Wood, Early Gallia County Court Records, 1846-1899; obituary of Harry Frank, Gallipolis Daily Tribune, September 17, 1900: 1). Since Frank was a common Jewish name, it cannot be determined if they were from the same family as peddler Moses Frank who died in Gallipolis in 1834. It is possible that he was their father, and that he immigrated in the 1830s, but died before he could bring over any other family members. Advertisement for Frank and Moch's Clothing Store, Gallipolis Bulletin 1 (April 22, 1868): 4. Other Jews from Soultz-sous-Forets settled in the Ohio Valley. Six of ten siblings from the Klein family did so: Samuel and his wife Stephanie (née Heymann, also from the village) lived near and in Wheeling after immigrating in 1848, and several of his siblings lived in Louisville and Cincinnati (Klein Family, Genealogies File, AJA). Continuing a traditional Alsatian Jewish trade, Leopold Frank of Gallipolis

Another group of Alsatian *landsleute* settled in Portsmouth. Louis Levi and Gottfried Mayer, partners in Levi and Mayer clothiers, and other Mayer relatives, Henry and Isaac, were all from the town of Niederseebach, about a dozen miles north of Haguenau and five miles from the Emsheimers' hometown. Still another group of Alsatians settled on the other side – downriver – from Cincinnati in Madison, Indiana. In 1850, the Jewish population there was overwhelmingly Central European, mainly German and Bohemian; only two of the thirty-two adults enumerated in that year's census were Alsatians. By 1860, the proportions had changed dramatically. Of the twenty-seven Jewish adults enumerated correctly that year (another eight had insufficient or incorrect information), more than a third – 37% – were Alsatian. The Sulzer and Ach families, as well as the Geismars and Wormsers, who were not listed on the 1860 census, were from one village, Grussenheim. Other members of the Ach family lived five miles away in Mackenheim. These families had not only Jewish, but also Catholic *landsleute*, and Raphael Sulzer even sponsored one young Catholic man for immigration to America.[30]

The Ohio River small towns are remarkable for the concentration of Alsatian Jews. Nine Alsatian villages can be identified as hometowns of Ohio Valley residents. Particularly noteworthy is that in mid-nineteenth-century Cincinnati, Alsatian Jews were

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supplemented his clothing and piece goods business with a sideline in cattle-dealing (Gallipolis Journal 34:16 [March 4, 1869], 3).

30 Re Levi and Mayer: Greenlawn Cemetery census, Portsmouth, Ohio, Ohio Historical Society. Re Madison: Elizabeth Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio," Indiana Jewish History 27 (July 1991): 23a-23b, 44a-44b; Weinberg, "Bernhard Felsenthal's Madison," Indiana Jewish History 24 (October 1988): 8-10.

only about five percent of the total Jewish population. In Gallipolis and Madison, it was much higher.[31]

If Alsatian Jews were over-represented in the small Ohio River towns, another group of Jews was underrepresented: those from Poznań. Between 1816 and 1870, about 11% of the Jewish population of Cincinnati was Posener; this percentage was greater than in some cities, like Columbus (4%) or Milwaukee (5%), but far less than in cities where Poseners concentrated, such as Boston (62%). Even so, few Poseners were in the small river towns. Two of those few were men who came to Henderson, Herman Schlesinger, from Breslau in Prussian Silesia (now Wroclaw, Poland), and Morris Metz, from Lissa, Posen (now Leszno, Poland).[32]

Certainly part of the reason for over-representation of Alsatians and the under-representation of Poseners lies in their differing European experiences. Even more than Bavarians, Jews in Alsace were used to living in village settings as a small minority surrounded by Gentiles. Poseners, on the other hand, tended to be from more urban settings where they were a larger percentage of the population. It is also the case that in many American Jewish communities, imported cultural differences and difference in length of experience in America created effective class barriers between Germans (mainly Bavarians) and "Polacks" (mainly Poseners). Often, each group had its own congregation and parallel charitable and social organizations. It is probable that Poznań

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31 Cincinnati statistics from Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 77.

32 Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 83; Henderson County, Kentucky, Cemetery Censuses, Henderson County Public Library.

Jews, feeling Bavarian Jews' condescension, simply chose not to try small towns where the Bavarians predominated so much more than in the cities.[33]

Although the Alsatians were most conspicuous, there were groups of *landsleute* from German regions as well throughout the Ohio River Valley. Many Jews around Paducah, Kentucky, in the lower Ohio Valley, were related, part of a large network of Dreyfusses, Weils, and Cohns. These families came from villages in the German state of Baden-Württemberg, on the east bank of the Rhein river, less than ten miles from the border with Alsace. Samuel Dreyfuss left for America in 1850; his six younger siblings – three sisters and three brothers, some of whom were quite young when Samuel left home – followed him to Kentucky. Numerous cousins and their spouses lived throughout the lower Ohio River Valley. As with the Mochs, first-cousin marriages reinforced family ties.[34]

Many early Jewish settlers in Henderson, Kentucky, were from the same general area of Bavaria. Herman Lauchheim and Simon Oberdorfer were from nearby towns in the provinceof Schwaben. Lauchheim was born in 1833 in the town of Nordlingen, halfway between Stuttgart, to the west in Baden-Württemberg, and Augsburg, to the southwest in Schwaben. (His family's name came from the village of Lauchheim only a few miles from Nordlingen.) Oberdorfer was from Hainsfarth, six miles northwest of

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[33] For examples of communal conflict among Jews of different European backgrounds, see Barkai, Branching Out, 92-99.

[34] Isaac Wolfe Bernheim , The Story of the Bernheim Family (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1910), 13, 97. Also Dreyfuss Family Genealogy, Genealogies File, AJA. Bernheim's mother was an older sister to Samuel Dreyfuss; she did not immigrate. Bernheim's half-brother, Herman Weil lived for years in Paducah. Half-sister Sara Weil Cohn lived in both Paducah and Cairo, Illinois; she died in Cairo and was buried in Paducah. First cousins Rosa Dreyfuss and Bernard Bernheim married.

Nordlingen. Hannah Oberdorfer came from the Baden town of Hechingen, about twenty miles south of Stuttgart.[35]

As the de facto Jewish capital of the antebellum trans-Appalachian West, Cincinnati was thus also the hub of these new networks of *landsleute* created by contacts in the city, between the city and small towns, and among the small towns. In his study of the origins of the Cincinnati community, Stephen Mostov discovered that a large percentage of the city's Jewish merchants had, like Jacob Elsas, gone from peddler to country merchant to city wholesaler or manufacturer, and that the chain migrations they initiated followed the same village-to-city pattern. Almost half of the merchants had come to Cincinnati from towns in the greater Ohio River Valley region: 22% from towns in Ohio, 10% from Indiana, and 8% from Kentucky.[36]

The European origins of Jews in the small river communities (at least those for whom information is available) were rather more diverse than those of Jews in Cincinnati. However, though there was not the huge representation from a single province, the majority do seem to have been Bavarians. For instance, as only one example, Portsmouth residents Mayer Seidenbach and Matthias Schloss both hailed from the Bavarian town of Maroldsweisach. Although this town is technically in the Unterfranken province (Lower Franconia), it is quite close to the border of Oberfranken (Upper Franconia).[37]

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[35] Henderson County, Kentucky, Cemetery Censuses, Henderson County Public Library.

[36] Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 96-97, 102.

[37] Data on Seidenbach and Schloss from based on data from Greenlawn Cemetery census, Portsmouth, Ohio, Ohio Historical Society. Among the mid-century Jewish settlers in Evansville were members of the Brentano family, a relative of whom founded the famous New York City bookstore. In addition to the New York connection, the Brentanos had family and business connections in Cincinnati (History of

Commercial connections between Cincinnati and Portsmouth were close, and several Portsmouth stores were essentially branches of city firms. Isaac Freiberg operated two stores in Portsmouth in the late 1850s, one for "Staple & Fancy Dry Goods, Cloaks, &c" and another for "wh[olesale] Liquors, Wines, &c." but went back to Cincinnati by 1860. Levi & Co. clothiers was owned by Louis Levi of Portsmouth and Lazarus Bloch of Cincinnati. Similarly, with the firm of Friedman and Eisman ("Wholesale & Retail Clothing, Dry Goods, Boots, Shoes, Hats & Caps &c"), Morris Friedman resided in Cincinnati, while partner Leopold Eisman lived in Portsmouth and ran the store there. The latter firm used the urban connection as a marketing tool, advertising in the Portsmouth Times that "[b]eing in immediate connection with our extensive establishment at 72 Pearl street, Cincinnati, we are enabled to sell at much lower rates."[38]

Some of the family groups forming the core of small town communities coalesced after immigration, in the flux of Cincinnati's large and fluid German Jewish immigrant community. This seems to be that case with an extended family group that settled in Pomeroy, Ohio, in the late 1850's. Bernhardt (Bennett) Baer and Sophia Mayer married in Cincinnati in 1857 before coming to Pomeroy; since he was from Württemberg and she from Hesse, they probably met in the city. So too, most probably, did August Mayer (Sophia's brother) and Mina Herzog, also a Bavarian. The nuclear families augmented

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Vanderburgh County, Indiana [Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889], 173-74). The Brentanos had lived in the small Jewish community (only 90 Jews as of 1850) that existed precariously in the Austrian province of Tyrol (E. S. Rimalt, "The Jews of Tyrol," in The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History and Destruction, ed. by Josef Fraenkel [London: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1967], 375-84).

[38] Re Freiberg: listing in Portsmouth City Directory and Advertiser for 1856; 1860 census for Ohio. Re Levi and Eisman: listings in Williams' Portsmouth City Directory for 1864-5 (Portsmouth: Stephenson & Patterson, 1864). Eisman was from Forchheim, Oberfranken, Bayern (see above, page 11). Friedman & Eisman advertisement: Portsmouth Times 3 (October 22, 1864): 4.

themselves with other relatives: in addition to August, Sophia's brother Daniel, came along to Pomeroy, as did Mina's brother Max.[39]

The connections with Cincinnati were particularly critical for single men who were living in small towns with few or no Jews, because it provided social contacts that could turn into marriage prospects. There were numerous examples of marriages between small-town men and city women: Harry Frank of Gallipolis and Fanny Silverman of Cincinnati in 1851; Aaron Cahn of Gallipolis and Carlina Hellman of Cincinnati in 1854; John Emsheimer of Gallipolis and Rachel Gotz of Cincinnati in 1861; Joseph Kaufman of Vevay, Indiana, and Bertha Pickert of Cincinnati in 1864; Joseph Klaus of Cairo, Illinois, and Fanny Lauer of Cincinnati, in 1865; Abraham Stern of Parkersburg, West Virginia, and Rachel Liebschutz of Cincinnati, also in 1865.[40]

Family formation laid the foundation for the formation of Jewish communities in the small river towns, as marriages and births of children increased small town Jewish populations and created more social stability. In Gallipolis, for example, the families of the Emsheimer brothers expanded rapidly. Michael Emsheimer married Esther Weikersheimer in New York City in 1863; their son Henry was born in Gallipolis in 1868. In 1864, Esther's sister Fanny came from New York to marry Michael's brother

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[39] Data from U.S. censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880; re Bennett and Sophia Baer, Pomeroy Tribune-Telegraph (April 8, 1903): 4. Other early Pomeroy settlers were Simon Silverman and his brother Samuel and sister-in-law Caroline, all natives of Bavaria.

[40] For Frank-Silverman: Obituary of Harry Frank, Gallipolis Daily Tribune (September 17, 1900) 1. For Cahn-Hellman: Evans and Wood, Death Notices, Obituaries and Marriage Notices . . . 1825 to 1875, 58 (excerpted from Gallipolis Journal, February 9, 1854). Cahn emigrated from the province of Hesse-Nassau around 1850, becoming a naturalized citizen in 1855 (Evans and Wood, Early Gallia County Court Records, 1846-1899). He was a subscriber to the Israelite in its first year of publication (Israelite 1 [September 22, 1854]: 88). For Emsheimer-Gotz: Die Deborah 7 (February 22, 1861): 136. Rachel Gotz Emsheimer was born in Germany in 1838. For Kaufman-Pickert: Die Deborah 10 (July 1, 1864): 4. For Klaus-Lauer: Die Deborah 11 (September 15, 1865): 44. For Stern-Liebschutz: Die Deborah 11 (November 3, 1865): 71.

Jacob. Brother Joseph and wife Fannie Siegel had a daughter Jeanette in Gallipolis in 1869. In February of the following year, John and Rachel Emsheimer also had a daugher, Belle. Samuel and Caroline Silverman, who moved to Pomeroy by the mid-1850s, quickly populated Pomeroy with their eight children born between 1854 and 1867. Samuel's brother Simon and sister-in-law Esther added three children. Though in the late 1870s, Simon and Esther moved to Gallipolis – the home of his sister Fanny Frank Silverman – a grown son remained in Pomeroy.[41]

The example of spouses or siblings who moved to small towns highlights the fact that village-to-city was not a one-way street. Mostov points out how Cincinnati Jews "maintained close personal and economic ties with Jews in the small towns they had migrated from." But equally important was the emerging network **among** the small towns. Dispersed throughout the Ohio River Valley, immigrants created new connections that extended and strengthened the support systems provided by the urban Jewish infrastructure.[42]

Business and family could connect Ohio River Valley Jews to more than one small town, and some Jews moved frequently from town to town. Samuel and Benjamin Wise maintained stores in both Parkersburg and Ironton in the 1850s. Joseph and Fannie Emsheimer lived in Wheeling, (West) Virginia in 1862, then in Gallipolis until about 1875, and then again in Wheeling from at least 1876 on. Sometime in the late 1860s, Michael and Esther Emsheimer also moved to Wheeling, where at least one family from

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[41] Marriage of Michael and Esther: Gallipolis Journal (August 20, 1863): 99. Marriage of Jacob and Fanny: Die Deborah 10 (July 29, 1864): 20. Births listed in Gallia County, Ohio, Birth Records, Vol. I, 1864-1881 (Gallipolis: Gallia County Genealogical Society, 1993). Remaining data from U.S. censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880.

[42] Quote from Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 230.

their hometown of Soultz-sous-Forets lived. Harry Frank originally settled in Ironton, then had businesses in Gallipolis, Cincinnati, and again in Gallipolis.[43]

Though secondary to Cincinnati, Louisville was also important to Jews in the small river towns in the same ways as the larger Ohio city. It was a local destination when leaving a small town, as for the Brandeis brothers when they left Madison, Indiana, in the early 1850s. The city provided business connections, for example, to Isaac Mayer, who maintained businesses in both Louisville and Portsmouth. It also served as a social resource for small-town Jews, for example, for Henry Baldauf, a Bavarian immigrant living in Henderson, who married Louisville native Josephine Dinkelspiel in the 1870s. Some of these social resources were provided by family connections. Members of the Dinkelspiel family had been among the earliest Jewish settlers in Louisville, and also in Madison, Indiana. Eventually, many more family members settled in Louisville. The peripatetic Joseph Dinkelspiel was there around 1840; he even served as the first regular "minister" of the congregation there. But he was also at various times in Madison, in Marietta and Steubenville, Ohio, and perhaps Metropolis, Illinois. A.H. Levi, a butcher in Portsmouth, retired to Louisville in 1879, probably to the home of a daughter.[44]

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[43] Re Wises: Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1127: Israelite 1 (September 8, 1854), 72. Re Emsheimers: Data calculated from census detail collected in William A. Marsh, comp., 1880 Census of West Virginia, vol. 12 (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1991), 167. Re Harry Frank: Gallipolis Daily Tribune (September 17, 1900): 1.

[44] Re Brandeises: Weinberg, "Bernhard Felsenthal's Madison," 2. Re Isaac Mayer: Portsmouth Times 14 (September 4, 1875): 3. Re Baldauf-Dinkelspiel: Ruth Baldauf Levi, telephone interview with author, June 14, 1995; Arthur Baldauf, interview with Darrel Bigham, Evansville, Indiana, 1974 (University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives), 4. Re Dinkelspiels: Herman Landau, Adath Louisville: The Story of A Jewish Community (Louisville: H. Landau and Associates, 1981), 6, 22; genealogical charts supplied by Ned Lewison, Baltimore, Md., July 2000. Joseph Dinkelspiel continued to move around: he died in 1904 in Dallas, Texas (Lewison, e-mail correspondence to author, September 19, 2000). Re Levi: American Israelite 33 (October 17, 1879): 7.

Not all up-and-coming Jewish merchants followed the track to a major city. Henry Baldauf, born in 1839 in rural Bavaria, came to the United States at the age of 14 and peddled his way to the Ohio River town of Brandenburg, Kentucky, where his older brother Morris had settled in the late 1840s or early 1850s. After some time peddling in the river towns, the brothers opened a store together in Brandenburg, followed by one downriver in Cloverport. They soon found themselves further downriver in Henderson where they settled permanently. In the late 1850s, after something under ten years in Gallipolis, Elias and Emma (Moch) Moch moved to Cincinnati, where Elias became an important businessman in the pioneering Jewish retail clothing firm of Heidelbach and Seasongood, and a leader in the Jewish community. But Elias' brother Moses and cousin Abraham remained in Gallipolis. By the second half of the nineteenth century, as Jews in small towns built community, the web of regional connection continued to be important, while Old World *landsman* loyalties were superseded by Jews' new identities as residents and boosters of their towns.[45]

Mostov relates Jewish identity and regional identity in a summary comment: "To be a Jew in Cincinnati meant not only that one might pray in a different place than non-Jews, or belong to a separate set of organizations. Rather, one's Jewishness was also an important factor in how one happened to have settled in Cincinnati and how long one

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[45] Re Baldauf: Interview with Bigham, 3-4. Some writers have reported that the tiny town of Brandenburg, on the Ohio some thirty-five miles downstream from Louisville, was named for Col. Solomon Brandenburg, a Jewish hero of the War of 1812; see article on "Jews" by Herman Landau in The Kentucky Encyclopedia, ed. John E. Kleber (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 470. Landau bases his statement on local sources; Bigham is skeptical (Herman Landau, letter to author, September 21, 2000; Darrel E. Bigham, e-mail correspondence to author, August 15, 2000). Re Elias and Emma: Moch Family Genealogy (AJA). Emma died in 1903 and Elias in 1910. He was president of the Plum Street Temple, Cincinnati's leading reform congregation.Re Moses and Abraham: American Israelite 36 (September 26, 1889): 2.

remained, of where one resided and worked within the city, and how one made a living." A similar dynamic prevailed in the small river towns: Jewishness was an important factor in why and how one came to the town, how one made a living, and how long one stayed.[46]

Up to a point. Mostov ends his study shortly after the Civil War and explicitly makes no conclusions about how long the patterns he uncovered persisted. As Jews in the small towns created their own institutions and as they were incorporated into small-town American culture, their relationship to the cities changed. To an extent, the Jews in the small river towns would always be the "country cousins." But increasingly, they identified as Jews of (for instance) Portsmouth, rather than Jews of Cincinnati residing in Portsmouth. Once established, small town Jewish life continued to evolve in response to local conditions.

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[46] Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio," 238.

## CHAPTER TWO: FINDING COMMUNITIES

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Cincinnati seemed to be the radiant hub of population and economic growth in the Ohio River Valley. From Marietta, Ohio, downriver to Evansville, Indiana, population grew at a rapid clip. Between 1830 and 1860, the Ohio counties of Meigs, which included Pomeroy, and Lawrence, which included Ironton, increased their populations by over 300%. Washington County (Marietta) and Scioto County (Portsmouth) increased by 200%, and Gallia County (Gallipolis) by 125%. Vandenburgh County, Indiana, including Evansville, surged from a population of 2,611 in 1830 to over 20,000 in 1860. On the south side of the river, antebellum growth was generally much more modest, though Paducah and McCracken County, Kentucky, experienced a surge comparable to Evansville's; Daviess County

(Owensboro) grew by 200% and Henderson County (and the town of Henderson) by over 100%.[1]

Governments fostered this economic and population growth with infrastructure development. In 1811, the federal government began construction on a surface road to connect the populous East Coast with the emerging trans-Appalachian west. Since the most important conduit to the West at the time was the Ohio River, the National Road was planned to link the East Coast rivers, and ultimately the Atlantic coast, with the Ohio. The Road began in Cumberland, in Maryland's western panhandle, and was linked by existing toll roads to Baltimore and by the Potomac River to the newly built federal capital at Washington, D.C. In 1818, the road reached the Ohio River, at Wheeling.[2]

To capitalize on water transport, many states in the 1820s and 1830s created artificial waterways to augment the system of natural streams, following New York and its Erie Canal. In Ohio, the center of the state was connected to the river cities of Cincinnati and Portsmouth by the Miami Canal and the Ohio & Erie Canal, respectively. The Muskingum River from Marietta to the interior was canalized to provide the same benefit. Indiana built the Wabash and Erie and the Whitewater Canals; Pennsylvania linked Philadelphia and Pittsburgh by canal. The Louisville and Portland Canal was built to provide an alternative route around the Falls of the Ohio, eliminating the need to unload cargo and take it by land past the obstruction. Despite the financial hardships of

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[1] Population statistics from web-based database of historical census statistics (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl).

[2] Gregory S. Rose, "Extending the Road West," in Karl Raitz, ed., The National Road (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 163. The Road was "one of the great porkbarrel projects in American history" and a symbol of America's growing sense of destiny in the West (Joseph Wood, "The Idea of a National Road," in Raitz, 95). Baltimore was chosen as the eastern access point **because** it was the closest seaboard harbor to the Ohio River (Karl Raitz, "The Face of the Country," in Raitz, 47).

such immense projects (which bankrupted several private companies and the state of Indiana), "their positive effects dominated," one historian concludes: "canals attracted population, opened multiple market outlets, played a crucial role in the export trade, lowered freight rates, and laid the basis for railroad development."[3]

And Americans' embrace of rail technology was remarkable. After early experiments in the 1820s, entrepreneurs laid track with alacrity: by 1840, the U.S. had almost 3,000 miles of rail, by 1850 about 9,000, and by 1860 about 30,000. In Ohio, between 1841 and 1850 alone, the state chartered seventy-six railroad companies. Although this expansion quickly surpassed the canal mileage, railroads did not immediately make the canals obsolete. Early on, the railroads worked in conjunction with established transportation modes, linking inland markets with river ports. By the 1850s all of the major Ohio River ports had direct rail connections with all major markets, but the rivers and canals continued to transport a considerable share of the region's goods.[4]

The three decades before the Civil War were critical for the development of the towns and cities on the banks of the Ohio River. Moving from a farming economy to one based on agricultural processing and manufacturing, the region on both sides of the river experienced the ups and downs of the volatile antebellum economy. In this dynamic setting, the Ohio River Valley offered ample opportunities for entrepreneurs, and by

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[3] George W. Knepper, Ohio and Its People (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 150-1; Darrel Bigham, "River of Opportunity: Economic Consequences of the Ohio," in Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience, ed. Robert L. Reid (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 141-2.

[4] "Railroads," in The Reader's Companion to American History, ed. Eric Foner and John A. Garraty (Boston.: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 906-7; Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 160; Bigham, "River of Opportunity," 153; Michael Allen, "The Ohio River: Artery of Movement," in Always a River, 120.

1860, immigrant Jews were well on their way to stable middle-class economic and social status in many of its towns.

One of the most appealing tales of nineteenth-century American Jewish history is that of the simple immigrant peddler from a German-speaking country who rises to great fame and fortune as a department store magnate. The sheer magnitude of the success of such men as Adam Gimbel, Edward Filene, Lazarus Straus, and Jacob Kaufman gives their stories a special luster and prominence in the narrative of American Jewry. These men are extreme examples of a phenomenon that shaped not only the economic standing of American Jews in the nineteenth century, but their cultural and social profile as well. Throughout the United States, thousands of young immigrant German-Jewish men rose to financial success and civic prominence through careers in retailing. Starting with extremely modest resources, they negotiated the intricacies of the American market economy with imagination, flexibility, and persistence. Within a generation, they were exemplars of the American myth of the "self-made man."

One path to economic success – and eventually to the middle class – intersected with traditional Jewish lines of trade: the peddling and other small-scale commerce which was, by law and by default, the most accessible and flexible occupation available to them. In the antebellum United States, immigrant German Jews found themselves in the right place at the right time with the right skills. A source of shame and ridicule in Germany, peddling in America was the first step on a ladder that could take a man to financial security and social acceptability.

The American society that the German Jewish immigrants encountered as their migration swelled from the 1830s on, was in transition to a market economy, experiencing, in fact, a "market revolution." Most Americans earned their livings through farming and artisanry, as the commercial and professional sectors, which provided distribution and other specialized services, grew slowly. In 1850, of native-born white American men in their prime working years (ages 20-65), about half were farmers and about one-quarter were common laborers or servants; one-sixth were skilled workers. The profile of incoming immigrants was much different. In 1849, for instance, a much smaller percentage of entering immigrants than residents were farmers, a slightly higher percentage were skilled workers, and a much higher percentage were common laborers or servants. Far fewer were in commerce or professions – only 3% as compared to 11% of natives. Among this 3% were most German Jews. For them, peddling was, as Hasia Diner puts it, "**the** premier occupation."[5]

Geographic mobility was the rule rather than the exception among antebellum immigrants generally; most left their port-of-entry cities within a few weeks of arriving. They often made several stops before settling down permanently, as they learned to match their skills with the opportunities available in various local economies. Upward mobility and increases in personal wealth were particularly noticeable among those immigrants who settled in the Midwest and West.[6]

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[5] Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution, 1815-1848 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Joseph Ferrie, Yankeys Now: Immigrants in the Antebellum United States, 1840-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36. The numbers for native-born American white men are 51% farmers, 17% skilled workers, 22% common laborers or servants, and 11% commercial and professional. The comparable immigrant numbers are, respectively, 28%, 23%, 46%, and 3%. Diner, Time for Gathering, 66.

[6] Ferrie, Yankeys Now, 70, 99, 127, 189.

On the hinge of the Midwest, the Ohio River Valley was a site for considerable Jewish economic mobility. As we have seen, in Pittsburgh, Louisville, and above all Cincinnati, Jewish population grew by leaps and bounds. Jews also settled in smaller towns and villages throughout the Ohio River Valley. By the 1850s, organized Jewish communities coalesced from groups of shop-keeping families in towns like Madison, Indiana, Wheeling, (West) Virginia, and Portsmouth, Ohio. Sample contemporary local records provide us a clearer picture of the shape and extent of Jewish economic mobility. We can track the rise of representative men from pack-peddling in the countryside to store ownership in the city, investigate their economic strategies, and learn something about the centrality of Jewishness in their creation of a new life in America.

Between mid-1840 and the end of 1853, some 440 individuals and partnerships registered for peddling licenses at the Jefferson County courthouse in Steubenville, Ohio. About 30% of these were Jews, obviously far out of proportion to their numbers in the general population.[7]

The profile of Jewish peddlers was distinctly different from that of the non-Jews, most of whom were English and Irish immigrants. Of the Jewish peddlers licensed in the county in this period, three-fourths were pack-peddlers, that is, they walked their routes carrying their goods in a back-pack. The remaining one-quarter had a horse (or less frequently, two horses) and a wagon, equipment which stepped them up to the next level in the peddling hierarchy. Of the non-Jews, a majority -- though a smaller one, somewhat

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[7] All information about peddlers in Jefferson County is derived from data in "Licenses to Travelling Merchants, Boat Stores, and Pedlars in Ohio, Taken from Records in the Jefferson County Court House, Steubenville, Ohio," compiled by Mary E. Thomas (Reynoldsburg, Ohio: Research Unlimited, [n.d.]). Ohio Historical Society reference collection. This data is presented in tabular format on page 24 of this chapter.

over half -- also peddled on foot, and about one-quarter by horse and wagon. The rest, about one-sixth of all non-Jewish peddlers, sold from flatboats on the Ohio River and its tributaries. There were apparently no Jews who had boat stores.[8]

Part of the reason for the lack of Jewish participation in the water-borne trade was no doubt the higher cost of such an enterprise. First, of course, was the investment in the boat itself; keeping it licensed also cost a good deal more. In 1840, a three-month license to peddle by foot in Jefferson County cost $2.50. If one had a one-horse wagon, it was $5.00, and two horses, $7.50. A boat license, however, for the same time period, was $15.00. In the early 1850s, the cost differential was still high: $3.00 for a pack-peddler, $5.00 for one horse and wagon, $7.00 for two horses and wagon, and again topping out at $15.00 for a boat. One had to be sure of a higher profit margin to make the investment in a boat-store a wise one. There were also strategic "marketing" considerations. Jewish pack-peddlers of course traveled by boat throughout the Ohio River Valley. But when they disembarked, they had far more flexibility than with a boat-store in creating their market area; they could go almost anywhere on foot. With a horse and wagon, a peddler could carry even more goods and still retain the ability to touch base in the river ports.[9]

In addition, there were cultural, not just economic, factors at work. The rough-and-tumble culture of the river flatboaters – think Mike Fink – and later of riverboaters – think Mark Twain – was probably not very appealing to most young immigrant Jewish

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[8] One Henry Wiseman registered to trade by "watercraft" in 1849, but in the absence of other evidence, I hesitate to conclude definitively that he was Jewish. It's possible, though, since most of the local non-Jews were of English or Irish background, as contrasted with other areas of the Ohio River Valley where the dominance of German Christians makes name identification next to impossible.

[9] See examples of pack-peddlers described in Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," Jewish Social Studies 7 (April 1945), 121, and in Maxwell Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods, and Clothing: An Introduction to the Study of the Cincinnati Peddler," Jewish Quarterly Review 53 (April 1963), 312.

men. Their orientation was always toward the goal of a more stable life. Leaving the "adventure" of the road for a position as a clerk or manager, and –ultimately – owner, of a store in town, they could establish a permanent residence and create a family life, options which were denied them in Germany.[10]

Working toward a specific goal, Jews rose more quickly than non-Jews in the local peddling hierarchy. They were more likely to move sooner from pack-peddling to horse-and-wagon than were non-Jews. In the early 1840s, when 40% of the peddlers in Jefferson County were Jews, almost all of those Jews (92%) were pack-peddlers, compared with 59% of non-Jews. By the early years of the next decade, though, when far fewer of the registered peddlers were Jews (25%), less than half (43%) were pack-peddlers -- a decrease of 50%. For the non-Jews, the decrease was about 25%, to 56% pack-peddlers. (The percentage of boat peddlers declined slightly: the change was in the number travelling by horse and wagon.)

To be sure, there was a decrease in the absolute number of peddlers over the 1840s and 1850s. By the mid-nineteenth century, peddling no longer served an important economic function: it was now only a way to scrape by, not a strategy for success. In Jefferson County in the early 1840s, an average of about 30 non-Jews and 20 Jews registered for peddling licenses each year. By the early 1850s, only about 23 non-Jews and 8 Jews did, representing decreases of 24% and 62% respectively. Not only were Jews moving more quickly up the peddling hierarchy: they were also more quickly moving out of peddling altogether into fixed store locations. In the mid-nineteenth century, these locations were often on river routes. Peddlers used the rivers for

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[10] For descriptions of flatboat and steamboat cultures, see Allen, "The Ohio River: Artery of Movement," in Always a River, 112, 120.

transportation and merchants in town for shipping of their goods. "'The Shylocks prefer to be on the navigable streams,'" grumbled one mid-century merchant of his Jewish competitors.[11]

With greater carrying capacity and with an urban base, peddlers could sell ready-made clothes, not just materials for their construction, providing isolated families the convenience and prestige of participation in this modern, convenient way of clothing oneself. Jewish peddlers bought their supplies from Jewish clothing wholesalers, and –as we have seen in the case of Cincinnati – some of these wholesalers turned to manufacture. So although the peddling life meant young Jewish men were often isolated on the road for weeks at a time, the overall structure of the trade kept them closely connected to the regional urban Jewish businesses that supplied their goods and credit and to the Jewish communities growing in the towns. Economic and social life were intertwined. One can see this phenomenon in the careers of individual peddlers in the Upper Ohio River Valley: the transition from pack-peddling to horse-and-cart to store and the importance of family and communal ties in the transition.[12]

Take, for instance, the Ballenberg brothers. In January 1841, Julius Ballenberg registered as a pack-peddler in Jefferson County, probably working for Marx Graf, a Jewish merchant in Wheeling. A few years later, Julius and his brother Adolph opened a dry goods store in Wheeling, which they maintained into the mid-1850s. In 1850, Julius shows up again on the list of peddlers granted licenses in Jefferson County, but this time he has a one-horse wagon and soon a two-horse wagon. Recognizing the advantages of

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[11] Glanz, "Early Jewish Peddling," 133; quote on 124.

[12] Glanz, "Early Jewish Peddling," 125.

having a "traveling salesman," the Ballenberg brothers combined two modes of marketing to extend the reach of their business. They remained in Wheeling at least until the middle of the Civil War.[13]

The combination of peddling and store-keeping was a means of self-help for members of the Heyman family. Alexander Heyman was one of the first Jews in Wheeling, moving there from Pittsburgh in 1841. That same year, Meyer Heyman (probably a cousin) acquired a peddling license in Jefferson County, probably working out of Alexander's store. Meyer's career was slow but steady: in 1853, he was still peddling, at least part-time, but by 1857 he had established a dry-goods business in Wheeling which was substantial enough to warrant positive attention from the local credit reporters for the Dun company. In fact, by 1864, the year he bought out cousin Alexander, he was even "considered well-off." Meyer also provided a safety net to his brother Wolff, who was described by a credit reporter in 1857 as "emphatically 'a poor devil.'" Apparently, Wolff once had a drygoods business in Wheeling which had collapsed about a decade earlier; after several years obtaining release from his remaining debts, he was back to peddling, apparently for Meyer. The 1860 census reports him employed as a clerk, probably in Meyer's establishment.[14]

It was not at all unusual for striving entrepreneurs to experience repeated business failures; there was no road to success that did not have potholes. Solomon Bloch peddled

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[13] Virginia, Vol. 34, p. 173, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School (HBS) (used by permission); Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958 ([n.p.], 1963), 1368. The Ballenbergs may have suffered a reverse during this period, because in 1852 Julius is again peddling by foot. They may have gone to Cincinnati after Wheeling.

[14] Re Alexander Heyman: Jacob Feldman, The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History, 1755-1945 (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986), 15. Information and evaluation of Meyer and Wolff Heymann: Virginia, Vol. 34, p. 121, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS.

in Jefferson County from 1848 through 1852, traveling by foot until he could work his way up to afford a wagon. Things were tough. Starting out on foot in March 1848, he was able to register a one-horse wagon in September, but in January 1849 he was back on foot. In another three months, he had a wagon again – and in yet another three months was again without it. This happened one more time before he had an entire year's work from a one-horse wagon. Finally, sometime between 1852 and 1860, Bloch was able to establish himself in Wheeling where he stayed until his death in 1865.[15]

Through the travails of his work life, though, Bloch had the lifeline of the Jewish community in Wheeling. Despite – or rather because of – the peripatetic nature of peddling, Jewish men felt the need to make firm communal connections. The network of peddlers in the Upper Ohio Valley formed the nucleus of the Jewish community of Wheeling; the list of Jefferson County peddling licenses for 1840 through 1853 includes the names of at least eight men who were then or later residents of that Ohio River city.[16]

The choice to settle in Wheeling reflected an assessment of the city's promise as a powerful regional center in the antebellum era. In 1811, it was chosen as the Ohio River terminus of the National Road, and when the road was completed to there in 1818, tons of merchandise and hordes of travelers began to flow through its wagon terminals, connecting with downriver boats to Cincinnati and Louisville.[17]

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[15] Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 43.

[16] Julius Ballenberg, Solomon Bloch, Meyer Heyman, Selig Mendile, Elias Wolff, Seligman (Sigmund) Oppenheimer, Jacob Haas, Emanuel Reis (Rice).

[17] See Raitz, The National Road.

Elements in Wheeling's further growth confirmed the wisdom of Jewish peddlers in locating on rivers, but eschewing direct involvement with river transport operation. Starting in the 1850s, America's railroads began to gain ascendancy over watercraft in commercial transportation. The early railroads owed their growth to the river, but by the same token a railroad connection was necessary for a river town to thrive. In 1852, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad completed its track to Wheeling and connected it via other lines to Cincinnati by 1857, confirming Wheeling's position as a link in the east-west chain. Between 1830 and 1860, the population of Wheeling's surrounding Ohio County grew by 44%, compared with only 16% in Jefferson County, Ohio. With a population of 16,000 in 1860, Wheeling was the second-largest city in Virginia.[18]

The city was a Jewish anchor for many of the young peddlers in the region, though the peripatetic nature of peddling probably impeded the formation of formal congregational institutions. As early as 1846, the Philadelphia Jewish newspaper, the Occident, reported the existence in Wheeling of "a sufficient number of Jews to form a small congregation, and we believe likewise that they have met for prayers." Organization of a cemetery association and proto-congregation actually took place in 1849; among the founders were three peddlers from the Jefferson County list, Julius

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[18] Bigham, "River of Opportunity," in Always a River, 153; John F. Stover, "Baltimore and Ohio Railroad," in Robert L. Frey, ed., Railroads in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 20-2; John Alexander Williams, West Virginia: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 50. Population statistics from web-based database of historical census statistics (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl). Some German Jewish peddlers apparently settled or were based in Steubenville. One Abraham Fromman peddled in Jefferson County in late 1851 and early 1852; Morris Frohman was listed as a merchant in Steubenville in the mid-1850s. There is also a reference to an "E. Frohman" of Steubenville in an early issue of the Israelite (1:9 [September 8, 1854], 72). The Mays who opened a store in Steubenville in the 1860s (Joseph B. Doyle, 20th Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio, and Representative Citizens [Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing, 1910], 743) may have been preceded to the region by one Nathan May who peddled there in the mid-1840s.

Ballenberg, Solomon Bloch, and Seligman Oppenheimer. Bloch, Ballenberg and Meyer Heyman all served as officers in the 1850s. Passing through Wheeling in 1855, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of the American Reform movement, groused a bit about the disorganized state of Jewish affairs there, obviously reflecting his bias towards institutional goals. But as more Jews settled down, the informal bonds – likely quite satisfactory to the peddler group, if not to Wise – became the foundation of a thriving Reform congregation with the mellifluous name Leshem Shomayim (For the Sake of Heaven).[19]

Meyer Heyman remained in Wheeling, operated a clothing business, and was active in the congregation until his death in the late 1880s. Solomon Bloch's sons Samuel and Aaron (who Anglicized the spelling of their name) owned and operated Block Brothers Tobacco Manufacturers; Samuel died in Wheeling in 1937. A member of the Heyman family was still in the clothing business at least in the 1890s, as were descendants of yet another mid-century peddler, Emanuel Reis.[20]

Wheeling provided a secure context for personal Jewish mobility and communal development. In other Ohio River towns in the mid-nineteenth century, economic and cultural factors created different configurations of Jewish residence and community. The stories of Marietta, Ohio, and Madison, Indiana, exemplify such alternatives.

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[19] Occident, 4:8 (November 1846), 405; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1328-1330; Harry Levi, "A Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim, Wheeling, West Va.," Wheeling, 1899, 8 (Wheeling, WV – Nearprint, American Jewish Archives); Occident 10:2 (May 1852), 108; Wise quoted in Jacob R. Marcus, ed., Memoirs of American Jews, Vol. 3, (Philadelphia: JPS, 1955), 3.

[20] Merchants of Wheeling, WV, June 1891, SC-12959, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1563.

The town of Marietta was the fruit of a joint-stock company set up by Revolutionary War veterans in New England. After traveling overland from eastern Massachusetts, the Ohio Company's colonists floated themselves down the Ohio River from a point near Pittsburgh to the mouth of the Muskingum River, where they disembarked in April 1788. From its inception, Marietta understood itself as something more than an ordinary frontier town. It was the first organized settlement in the Northwest Territory, an outpost of New England Federalism and Congregationalism. In the 1830s and 1840s, as the German Jewish immigration was beginning to swell, Marietta's economy was beginning to move after several decades of stagnation. A shipbuilding industry, profitable in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was revived, and various new businesses tried to maximize economic benefit from the river. Population grew accordingly. In 1820, the population was a tiny 1,300; by 1850, it was over 3,100.[21]

Among those who swelled the ranks were Prussian-born Charles Coblenz and Baden-born Joseph Dinkelspiel, who had both arrived in the Ohio Valley around 1840. They peddled for a while along the river (including in Jefferson County in 1841 and 1842) and registered for citizenship naturalization at the Washington County courthouse in Marietta in 1842. Dinkelspiel kept on moving downriver; he lived in Louisville, Kentucky, from (at a minimum) 1844-1846 and was in Madison, Indiana, by 1849. Coblenz, however, stayed in Marietta for some time. Around 1844 – and perhaps as early as 1842 – he went into business with his brother Samuel, advertising dry goods and

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[21] Michael P. Marchione, "Economic Development and Settlement Patterns in the Flood Plain of the Upper Ohio Valley" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1971), 214-18. For colonial history of Marietta, see Part One – Chapter One above.

groceries as well as ready-made clothing from New York and Philadelphia, all for sale from their location "at the store rooms of Mr. Hill on Greene Street." By 1850, both men had growing families. Charles, then age 35, and his German-born wife Henrietta, age 30, had three children, all born in Ohio. Samuel, 33, and his German-born wife Frances, 25, had a one-year-old daughter.[22]

The brothers had an extended family network. Charles and Henrietta's household in 1850 also included 22-year-old Celena Coblenz, almost certainly a close relative, and 18-year-old Bernard Cahn, perhaps a relative, but at least a *landsman*. Another Coblenz family – Lazarus and Rebecca and their four children – lived in 1850 in Monroe County, just upriver from Marietta. They were in Marietta within a few years; in 1854 Lazarus received his citizenship there and his daughter Julia was married there to Jacob Jacobs. Lazarus was perhaps an elder brother to Charles and Samuel.[23]

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[22] Neither Coblenz nor Dinkelspiel is listed in the 1840 Ohio census, but both registered their Declarations of Intention to become American citizens in the Washington County court on May 23, 1842. Technically, these declarations could only be made after two years residence. Coblenz was naturalized in Washington County court in September 1845. Court records also list one "Solomon" Coblenz as naturalized at the same time, his Declaration of Intent having been registered in Philadelphia in 1839. The name "Solomon" may well be a mistake; the entry probably refers to Samuel Coblenz, Charles' brother. For Dinkelspiel in Louisville, see Landau, Adath Louisville, 6. The 1850 census for Madison lists the 37-year-old Joseph and his 31-year-old wife Caroline with their 8-year-old son Isaac. Isaac was born in Ohio, perhaps (since he was born in 1842) in Marietta (Elizabeth Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio," Indiana Jewish History 27 [July 1991], 23a). Coblenz business advertisement in Marietta Intelligencer, June 20, 1844. Since, according to the 1850 census, Charles and Henrietta Coblenz's eldest child was seven years old, they had perhaps settled in Marietta in 1842 before his birth. Specific data is from the 1850 manuscript census for Ohio.

[23] Both Celena and Bernard were born in Germany. In the 1890s, in Baltimore, Bernard Cahn's son married Charles Coblenz's daughter (Personal correspondence from Ned Lewison, Baltimore, Md., August 7, 2000). Per the 1850 Ohio manuscript census, Lazarus and Rebecca Coblenz were both born around 1805. In 1850, their children, all born in Prussia, were ages 4 through 13, so the family immigrated no earlier than 1846. Lazarus Coblenz' naturalization from Washington County records; in 1851 he had registered his declaration of intent to become a citizen in Noble County, just to the north of and inland from, Washington County. Coblenz-Jacobs marriage license dated December 24, 1854, from Washington County courthouse records (the couple was married by a justice of the peace, there being no rabbi in the area).

Also living with Lazarus and Rebecca at the time of the census in late 1850 was a young couple. Zachariah Coblenz and Fanny Dinkelspiel Coblenz, who had been married just that summer in her hometown of Madison, Indiana. Zachariah may have been a fourth Coblenz brother, and Fanny was sister to none other than Joseph Dinkelspiel, Charles Coblenz's friend and erstwhile business associate. Yet another related family was that of Joseph Ullman and Sarah Dinkelspiel Ullman. It is not clear whether Sarah was sister or cousin to Joseph and Fanny Dinkelspiel, but she and her husband lived in Marietta from about 1843 until about 1855. Charles and Samuel dissolved their business partnership in 1851. Samuel continued as sole proprietor for another year, perhaps succeeded by Lazarus, but none of the Coblenzes remained in Marietta, or even in Ohio, by 1860.[24]

The city continued to grow, adding another 35% to its population in the 1850s thanks to a nascent petroleum industry, but long-term prospects looked bleak. That decade, as rails began to replace the river, several local railroad companies failed for lack of sufficient traffic, demonstrating, write historians Andrew Cayton and Paula Roush Riggs, that "even with a connection to the outside world, Marietta would not grow . . . . [since the problem was] the general economic worthlessness of southeastern Ohio." In addition, the city was beginning to exhibit some cultural signs that would continue to

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[24] Re Dinkelspiel-Coblenz marriage: Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites," 33a. On the marriage license application, Zachariah listed his hometown as Marietta. He may have lived in town to work with Charles and Samuel before his marriage. Re Coblenz persistence in Marietta: Ohio, Vol. 193, p. 118, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS; also, 1860 Ohio manuscript census.

According to research done by a descendant, the Ullmans' sojourns followed a familiar – and familial – pattern. They arrived in the United States in the late 1830s and spent a few years in Pennsylvania before coming to Marietta. After they left Marietta, they moved to Louisville and then Baltimore. This same descendant has traced Charles and Samuel Coblenz to post-Civil War Baltimore, where they died in 1871 and 1896, respectively. They are buried in the cemetery of Congregation Oheb Shalom. (Personal correspondence from Ned Lewison, Baltimore, Md., July 11, 2000). Lewison thinks Sarah, Joseph and Fanny were siblings (personal correspondence, August 7, 2000).

inhibit growth. As Cayton and Riggs note, "Visitors in the 1850s admired the beauty and neatness of Marietta. 'The great majority of the dwellings are perfect pictures of comfort,' wrote the correspondent of The Cincinnati Enquirer in 1857. But outside observers also continued to detect, amid the small-scale economic upswing, a lack of 'energy.' Marietta 'should be a place of considerable business,' wrote another visitor in 1859. But it seemed that the 'wealthy portion of the community have their capital invested, and are indifferent about the growth of the place. It suits them and they do not want it larger.'"[25]

In the dynamic Ohio River Valley, Marietta decided that it would simply opt out of the race. A mythic Federalist image was not, to say the least, a major attraction for Jewish immigrants needing opportunity and connection. There continued to be a small German Jewish presence in Marietta throughout the nineteenth century. At the end of the century, when a new wave of Jewish immigration coincided with another economic boom in the Upper Ohio River Valley, a significant and organized Jewish community evolved, though once again cultural issues intervened in its development.[26]

A similar dynamic of local growth and stagnation helped shape the Jewish community in Madison, Indiana. In 1852, Isaac Leeser wrote in his newspaper, the

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[25] Andrew R.L. Cayton and Paula R. Riggs, City into Town: the City of Marietta, Ohio, 1788-1988 (Marietta: Dawes Memorial Library, 1991), 124-29. For railroads, see also Sarah H. Gordon, Passage to Union: How the Railroads Transformed American Life, 1829-1929 (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996). Some observers attributed this economic conservatism to historical cultural attitudes. Mariettans, wrote one in 1847, exhibited "a portion of the good old customs and steady habits of their pilgrim ancestors; and also their veneration for the institutions of religion, literature, and morality" (quoted in Marchione, "Economic Development," 209). The New England cultural hegemony was more apparent than real, of course, but in response to their contemporary situation and their understanding of the city founders' legacy, mid-nineteenth-century civic leaders decided to "[turn] the economic stagnation of their community into an asset" by emphasizing its cultural kinship with New England (Cayton and Riggs, City Into Town, 155-56).

[26] This will be explored in a future chapter.

Philadelphia-based Occident, of his travels to Indiana, commenting that though there was but one Jewish family in the capital city of Indianapolis, there were several in Madison, seat of Jefferson County. Leeser observed hopefully, "Many towns on the Ohio, both above and below Cincinnati, besides Madison, have Jewish inhabitants; and we should not wonder if, should the immigration from Europe continue in the ratio lately prevalent, in the course of ten years twenty new congregations should spring up."[27]

Leeser had reason to be optimistic about Madison. Settled in 1810, the town was at the top of a horseshoe bend in the Ohio River, giving it closer access to Indiana's rich agricultural interior than other cities. It is also, as the 1850 Indiana Gazetteer noted, "beautifully situated . . . on steep and rugged hills" with most of the city thirty to forty feet above flood level. This advantage made it the largest town in Indiana in 1816, the year of statehood. In 1818, it had more than 800 residents, and in 1830, almost 1800, placing it second only to New Albany. In addition to the dry goods stores, groceries, and taverns that served many river customers, there were several nascent industries (e.g., a cotton spinning factory, a grist mill, and a steam mill) to serve the local countryside.[28]

The following twenty-five years were a golden era for Madison. Its population quintupled as improved rail lines were opened to Indianapolis and a surface road all the way to Michigan City on Lake Michigan. Madison became Indiana's "Porkopolis." By the mid-1840s, it was the largest pork-packing center in Indiana, and third in the entire Midwest. In contrast to Marietta, "Madison, with a population of 8,000 in the early

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[27] Occident 10:1 (April 1852), 50-51.

[28] Robert M. Taylor, Jr., ed., Indiana: A New Historical Guide (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989), 117; Indiana Gazetteer or Topographical Dictionary of the State of Indiana (Indianapolis: E. Chamberlain, 1850, reprinted 1977), 297.

1850s, was not simply linked to the world of market capitalism; it was the embodiment of a market town . . . . [It] had all the elements necessary for success in a world of commercial capitalism."[29]

These boom years also saw the birth of Madison's Jewish community, as the first Jewish settlers, in the late 1840s, were drawn up from the South via the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In 1848, Adolph Brandeis came from his hometown of Prague, Bohemia, to Cincinnati, which he used as his base for scouting out a new home in the Ohio River Valley for his extended family. The group of twenty-four comprising the Brandeis-Dembitz-Wehle family arrived in Madison a year later. Though most Madison Jews were typical German Jews, petty merchants from small towns and villages, the Brandeis-Wehle clan were urbanites and professionals; Samuel Brandeis was a physician and Lewis Dembitz, who had read law in Cincinnati, practiced in Madison in the early 1850s.[30]

The 1850 census enumerated fifty-two Jewish individuals in Madison, though a local historian estimates that the actual total was probably closer to sixty. Unlike some other Ohio River towns, Madison was home to a diversity of Central European Jews: many Germans (from Bavaria or Baden or Prussia) and Alsatians, but also a representation of Austrians, Poseners and Bohemians. Most had immigrated in the late 1840s, and Madison was the first town in which they settled. Most of the young children

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[29] Taylor, Indiana, 118-19; James H. Madison, The Indiana Way: A State History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 90; Andrew R.L. Cayton, Frontier Indiana (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 279 (quote).

[30] Elias and Teresa Hilpp, reportedly the first Jewish family to settle, in 1846, in Madison, had earlier sojourned in New Orleans and Louisville. Another early settler, Aaron Marks, had also lived in the South. Other early settlers included the Kronenberger brothers and the Hoffstadt family (Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites," 22-24).

listed in the 1850 census had been born in Europe. But because many of the families were young, and because of numerous marriages among Madison Jews, forty-five Jewish children were born in Madison between 1847 and 1860.[31]

In the 1850s, a second wave of Jewish immigrants settled in Madison, some joining family members who had preceded them. Many of the immigrants in this decade were *landsmen* from the Alsatian villages around Colmar, south of Strasbourg, and four families were from one town, Grussenheim. With their numbers apparently growing, the Madison Jewish community began to organize. There were informal meetings for worship probably as early as 1849, followed by the formal organization of Congregation Adath Israel and a school in 1853. The congregation purchased land for a cemetery in August 1855 and dedicated a small synagogue the following month.[32]

But the appearance of new settlers in the 1850s was part of a significant turnover in Madison's Jewish population that decade. Numbers had indeed increased, from probably 60 residents in 1850 to 80 or 90 in 1860. The growth, though was mostly natural increase: in 1850, the census counted 52 individuals in fifteen families; in 1860, there were 80 individuals in twenty families. And most of these twenty families had not been in Madison ten years previous. Gottlieb Wehle and much of his extended family left for New York City; the families of Brandeis brothers, Samuel and Adolph, stayed in the Ohio Valley, but went to Louisville. Some Jewish population was also drawn off to

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[31] Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites," 23a, 36a-b. Weinberg states that ten individuals she is certain were in Madison in 1850 were somehow omitted from the census. The effects of the diversity of backgrounds on Madison's Jewish community will be explored in Chapter Five.

[32] Elizabeth Weinberg, "Bernhard Felsenthal's Madison," Indiana Jewish History 24 (October 1988), 8-10, 18; Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites," 6; Israelite 2 (August 6, 1855), 39.

Indianapolis, as well as to other Indiana towns and to Cincinnati. Scarcely any Jews moved to Madison in the 1860s.[33]

Madison's non-Jewish population was equally fluid in this period, as local economic conditions changed. The railroads, which seemed to promise continued prosperity, turned out to have the opposite effect: Madison discovered, as did many small towns, that railroads not only ran into your town, but also out of it. With the expansion of the regional railroad system and Chicago's rise to Midwest dominance, Indianapolis' central location became more useful to Indiana business than Madison's door on the river. By 1860, both Indianapolis and Evansville had outstripped Madison in population and importance. Madison's apparent decline after the mid-1850s was in fact a return to more normal growth rates, and the population continued to grow until the 1870s. But, as with Marietta, it was clear that Madison would never be more than a picturesque small town.[34]

Likewise, Madison's Jewish community remained small, but stable throughout the nineteenth century. In 1868, the congregation moved into its own building, a vacant high school purchased from the city. In 1880, there were thirty-one families, established and affluent: members of many of these families lived in Madison until well into the twentieth century – one descendant even until 1986.[35]

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[33] Weinberg, "Bernhard Felsenthal's Madison," 2, and "Hoosier Israelites," 35, 26a-b.

[34] Taylor, Indiana, 120.

[35] Elizabeth Weinberg, "Visitor's Tour: Madison, Indiana's Jewish Community, 1849-1923," Indiana Jewish History 23 (April 1988), 11.

Through the 1860s, German Jewish immigrants became less mobile as they settled into cities and towns, if not permanently, at least for considerable sojourns. With this new commitment to place, they started families, built their businesses, and created Jewish communal institutions. Most achieved some measure of economic security, and they accomplished something equally important: they planted the seeds of Jewish community. The ideals of stable bourgeois independence and of communal interdependence were far from mutually exclusive. In business life and in Jewish life, German Jewish immigrants continued to work together to create a comfortable place for themselves in the mid-nineteenth century Ohio River Valley.

## JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH PEDDLERS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, OHIO 1840-1853*

**1840-1843**
peddling licenses issued to 197 individuals or partnerships
40% Jewish (N=79)

| mode of transportation | Jews | non-Jews (N=118) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| foot | 92% (N=73) | 59% (N=70) |
| horse(s)/wagon | 8% (N=6) | 22% (N=26) |
| boat | none | 19% (N=22) |

**1844-1849**
peddling licenses issued to 178 individuals or partnerships
21% Jewish (N=37)

| mode of transportation | Jews | non-Jews (N=141) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| foot | 68% (N=25) | 53% (N=75) |
| horse(s)/wagon | 32% (N=12) | 29% (N=41) |
| boat | none | 18% (N=25) |

**1850-1853**
peddling licenses issues to 120 individuals or partnerships**
25% Jewish (N=30)

| mode of transportation | Jews | non-Jews (N=90) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| foot | 43% (N=13) | 56% (N=50) |
| horse(s)/wagon | 57% (N=17) | 31% (N=28) |
| boat | none | 13% (N=12) |

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* Derived from data in "Licenses to Travelling Merchants, Boat Stores, and Pedlars in Ohio, Taken from Records in the Jefferson County Court House, Steubenville, Ohio," compiled by Mary E. Thomas (Reynoldsburg, Ohio: Research Unlimited, [n.d.]).

** The total number of licenses tabulated here is 495. For the entire time span (1840-1853), there were 440 individuals who took out licenses at least once. Duplications within a single time segment (1840-1843, 1844-1849, 1850-1853) have been ignored.

## "EIN WINK" –

## A FAREWELL WAVE FROM A GERMAN JEWISH IMMIGRANT

The following poem appeared on the front page of Die Deborah on March 17, 1865. It is attributed to one Isaac Rothschild and bylined from Parkersburg, West Virginia. I have been unable to identify the author, although it is likely that he did not reside in Parkersburg for long. He may even have written while passing through on a business or other journey.

Clearly, though, Rothschild was no ordinary immigrant peddler. He was competent in German language and evidently knowledgeable about German literature, since he uses many themes and phrases from standard nineteenth-century German poetic rhetoric. However, he applies these themes and phrases to the situation of the immigrant Jew, whose economic striving has created tensions with his past and anxieties about his future. For that reason, as well as because of its provenance, the poem seems relevant as an appendix to the discussion of nineteenth-century German Jewish immigrant adaptation to America and its ways.

Renate Fairweather assisted with the translation and Dirk Voss provided helpful comments on context.

## EIN WINK

Vom Schiffe weg, macht kaum den ersten Schritt,
Denkt sich so Mancher seiner Pflicht schon quitt,
Eilt mit des Schicksals tückischer Begierte
Nach Reichthum, Ehre, Pracht und dessen Zierte;
Er denkt nicht mehr der Eltern frommen Wantel,
Nicht ans Deutschlands Thun und dessen Handel,
Vergesset Gott, traut nicht mehr seinen Worten,
Es scheint, das er zum Umgläub'gen ist geworten.

Wie schön ist doch der Sabbath unsrer Feier,
Für jeden Frommen gewiss ein hold Erfreuer.
Sechs Tage durch wie oft nur Drang und Plage,
Am siebenten ruhend denkt nicht an seine Lage,
Ist bei den Seinigen, er fühlt sich einmal reich,
Ob auch der Tag so schnell vorüber schleicht
Er sieht zu Gott und hoffet seiner Gnade,
Folgt seinen Worten und horcht auf seinem Rathe.

Wie schnell flieht doch die Zeit die uns gegeben,
Wie wenig denkt man oft daran im Leben,
Hofft nur und zählt die vielen, vielen Jahre,
Die uns entfernen von der schwarzen Bahre;
Doch nur ein Hauch und wir sind eine Leiche,
Für wen ists's Hoffnung dann im Himmelreiche,
Wir sind dann des Diesseits Freude quitt,
Doch wohin lenkt sich des Jenseits Schritt?

Wie herrlich ist's wenn wir am Freundes Grabe
Den letzten Dienst erweisen -- wo ist seine Habe?
Wie herrlich dann wenn man im Allgemeinen
Den Hingeschiedenen für fromm und brav beweinen,
Wenn unter Alten Keiner der da spricht
Das er verdammt zu Hölle Strafgericht,
Wenn nur die Thräne von manchem Auge rinnt,
Thränen des Mittleides, Trauer und Leides sind.

Isaac Rothschild
Parkersburg, West Virginia
1865

## A (FAREWELL) WAVE

Off the ship, he hardly takes the first step,
Many a one thus thinks his duty is already "quits,"
He hurries with fate's false ambition
To riches, honor, opulence and their trappings.
He thinks no more of his parents' pious ways,
Not of Germany's doings and its practices,
(He) forgets God, no longer trusts His words.
It seems that he has become an unbeliever.

But how beautiful is the Sabbath of our celebration,
For all the pious certainly a beautiful delight.
Six days during which often (is) only stress and torment
On the seventh, resting, he does not think of his situation
As if he's with his own, he feels for once rich.
The day goes by so quickly and quietly,
He looks towards God and hopes for His blessing,
Follows His words and listens to his counsel.

How quickly flies the time that we are given,
How little one thinks of it while one is living,
Only hoping and counting the many, many years
Which separate us from the black bier.
But only a breath and we are a corpse
For whom there is hope only then in Heaven.
We thus leave the joy of this world.
To where do the steps of the Otherworld lead us?

How wonderful it is when, at a friend's grave,
We render the last service -- where are his possessions?
How wonderful it is when everyone together
Bewails the dead one as pious and upright,
When no one of our old acquaintances speaks of him
That he's damned to hell's punishment,
When the only tears shed from eyes
Are tears of sympathy, sadness and grief.

Isaac Rothschild
Parkersburg, West Virginia
1865

## CHAPTER THREE: FOUNDING COMMUNITIES

In 1869, August Mayer wrote to Cincinnati's Jewish newspaper, the Israelite, about his town, Pomeroy, Ohio. In Pomeroy, he reported, "[b]esides salt and coal, we have at present eight Jewish families." It seemed a wealth of resources.[1]

The seeds of community planted by German Jewish immigrants found more or less fertile soil in the small towns of the Ohio River Valley. The earliest informal networks of self-help, such as those constructed by peddlers, adumbrated the construction of formal social and cultural institutions. As we have seen, not in all locations on this Jewish frontier did Jewish institutions take root and thrive; variables of place and persons affected permanence. But up and down the river, Jews in small towns built lives based on close family relations, on the communal ties of benevolent societies and fraternities, and – perhaps paramount – on a new understanding of Jewish religious life. Their experiences were similar in many ways to those of fellow German Jews who had settled

[1] Israelite 15:30 (January 29, 1869): 6.

in Cincinnati and other large American cities, but differed in other respects. By the same token, as the years passed, small town Jews came to share many characteristics of their non-Jewish neighbors, while retaining a sense of separateness and specialness.

The most basic unit of Jewish community was the family. Largely because they were used to delaying gratification, immigrant German Jewish men put off marriage until they felt reasonably secure financially. As a result, since women were expected **not** to delay marriage if at all possible, wives were usually younger than their husbands. Spouses found each other through several channels. Some couples had made their plans while still in Europe, planning to marry after emigration. Sometimes men returned to their home village (if they could afford it) or wrote to relatives and friends there to find a bride. Other men met women through their American acquaintances and business contacts – perhaps they might marry the sister of one.[2]

When these families began to have children, they had them early and often. Scholars studying German Jews in cities, where the size of the community provides a large database, have amply demonstrated this. For instance, in Columbus, Ohio, by 1880, only about one-fourth of Jewish families had fewer than five children. In Cincinnati, the Jewish population more than tripled from 1850 to 1860, growing from 1,254 to 4,698. Even though this was a decade of massive immigration, the percentage of

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[2] Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 47, 66, 70-71, 92. Non-Jewish immigrants in the United States generally married later and had fewer children than they would have in Europe (Doris Weatherford, Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1930 [New York: Facts on File, 1995]). Because of the uniqueness of their past European circumstances, Jewish family formation patterns did not change as much in the United States (compared to post-emancipation German Jewish patterns) as did non-Jews' patterns (compared to their European counterparts).

Cincinnati Jews who were American-born grew from one-third to almost half, suggesting an equally astounding contribution from fecundity.[3]

The same pattern is evident even in the fragmentary data available from the small Ohio River towns. In Madison, Indiana, there were at least twelve Jewish households with children in 1860. These twelve families had a total of 38 children, all of them born in the previous decade. Most of the fathers (7 of 12) were in their thirties when their first child was born, four were in their late twenties, and one in his forties. The mothers were on average a decade younger. Similarly, in Wheeling, in a sample of eight families, most of the men were in their thirties when they became fathers, and most of the women were in their twenties when they became mothers. In each case, these were mostly young families with an average of 3 or 4 children, which was probably just a start.[4]

Because families were large, widowers often remarried quickly in order to provide care for their children. In Marietta, Ohio, Charles Coblenz's first wife Henrietta died in 1862, leaving four children aged 8 through 17; within two years, he had married Sallie Wurtzburger and they had had the first of five children in the "second" family. Simon Gumberts of Evansville, Indiana, was the father of thirteen children by his two wives: having been widowed from one Rothchild, he married her sister – with the bizarre result that the two sets of children were both half-siblings and first cousins.[5]

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[3] Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 78-79.

[4] Madison data calculated from tables in Elizabeth Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio – A History of Madson's Indiana Jews," Indiana Jewish History 27 (July 1991), 26a-26b, 44a-44b; Wheeling data calculated from 1860 U.S. manuscript census.

[5] Data on Coblenz family from genealogical information supplied by Ned Lewison, Baltimore, Md., personal correspondence, July 11, 2000; data on Gumberts family from Joseph P. Elliott, A History of Evansville and Vanderburgh County, Indiana, (Evansville: Keller Printing, 1897), 467.

The phenomenon of immediate remarriage points to the fact that support from the nuclear as well as the extended family was critical to German Jewish immigrants' rise into the middle class. In 1976, Rudolf Glanz wrote that "[t]he stability of Jewish married life in America was looked upon by friend and foe as an essential cause of the economic rise of the Jew in the new world as demonstrated by the image of the Jewish married man as the patient, tireless provider for his spouse and children." Glanz neglects to mention that the economic contributions of wives were also critical in the family's rise to the middle class. The source of this oversight no doubt lay in the fact that though the economic contribution of women was critical, it was usually hidden, seldom as well publicized as the men's businesses.[6]

The institution of marriage concealed the economic role of women, both as providers of household service and childcare, and as contributors to family businesses. But as Hasia Diner notes, "numerous contemporary commentators" mentioned women – and children – working in family retail establishments. Some traces are recorded of this activity on the part of women in the small towns of the Ohio River Valley. For instance, A.W. Uri opened a dry goods store in Mount Vernon, Indiana in the 1870s, with his wife supplying millinery services – but her name was not part of the business name and was not mentioned in advertising or publicity. Likewise, though Bertha Jacobs was not formally a partner in her husband's Wheeling business, she clearly had good business

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[6] Rudolf Glanz, The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Immigrant Generations, 1820-1929, Vol. II, The German Jewish Woman (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 89. Many mid-to-late-nineteenth century immigrant women are invisible to the historian for another reason: an 1855 U.S. law that automatically made them U.S. citizens through marriage to a male citizen. Thus there was no need for them to register for naturalization. See Linda K. Kerber, The Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998) and Candice Lewis Bredbenner, A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law of Citizenship (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

sense, advising her sister and brother-in-law, who were in the retail business in upstate New York, on financial management and investing.[7]

As a generality, the more quickly the German Jewish family ascended into the middle class, the sooner women became disengaged from the day-to-day aspects of business. It was a logical consequence of acculturation. As one scholar notes, it was of no special note to their contemporaries that colonial Jewish women had roles as merchants – at that time all women, Jews and non-Jews, and "even women of some means regularly performed important economic functions, both at home and in the outside world." But as manufacturing moved from the home to the factory, the public and private domains were sundered; men were assigned to the (competitive public sphere) and women to the (nurturing) private sphere, creating the "cult of domesticity" which was an integral part of the rise of the middle class. German Jewish immigrants, as much as other immigrants and native-born Americans, aspired to a life where mother kept house and father brought home the bacon (or its kosher equivalent).[8]

The family was an important site of acculturation, and here women played a special role through their adaptation of Jewishness to American domesticity. In their

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[7] Diner, A Time for Gathering, 82-83; re Uris, History of Posey County, Indiana (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1886 [1967 reprint]), 377-78; Letter from Bertha Jacobs to Sophie [?], [1866?], American Jewish Archives, SC-11023.

[8] Some of the extensive literature on this transformation includes: Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Paul G. Faler, Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Glenna Matthews, "Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). See also an excellent article on domesticity by Nancy Cott in Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg, eds., A Companion to American Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 181-83. Quote re colonial Jewish women: Irene D. Neu, "The Jewish Businesswoman in America," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 66:1 (September 1976), 137.

adherence to the American ideal of womanhood. German Jewish women created their own Jewish women's culture and negotiated the adaptation of American middle-class manners, etiquette, propriety, and decorum to the German Jewish milieu. So as the community grew and its institutional structure ramified, women played a significant role in anchoring German-Jewish culture to American bourgeois mores.[9]

For the most part, the German and Polish Jewish immigrants to the American cities of the colonial and revolutionary eras had integrated with the earliest Sephardic community; they adopted Sephardic customs, acknowledged Sephardic authority, and intermarried with them. But the newly arrived German Jews of the mass migration were not always welcome in the synagogues and other institutions established by this existing small, affluent, and acculturated American Jewish community in the East Coast cities. Established congregations such as New York's Shearith Israel began to admit members by secret ballot, with the (intended) result of excluding Jews they felt would not fit into their society.[10]

Instead, the immigrants founded new institutions in which they could feel comfortable and express their specifically German Jewish sensibility. The geographic distribution of the community and its dense occupational and (in large cities) residential concentration provided a strong social-structural basis for Jewish continuity. Within this

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[9] Glanz, in The Jewish Woman in America is primarily interested in this phase of acculturation and so he misses the transition. Ruth Abusch-Magder is examining this transition in her Yale University Ph.D. dissertation-in-progress. More examples of women's unique role will appear in context later in this present work. For an overview of how gender affected the immigration and acculturation experience in all ethnic groups, see Doris Weatherford, Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1930 (New York: Facts on File, 1995).

[10] Barkai, Branching Out, 92-94; Leon Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870 (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1976), 15-16.

framework, immigrant Jews developed a communal infrastructure adapted to meet their needs as middle-class Americans while retaining their link with the Jewish past and Jewish values.[11]

In the cities with substantial Jewish population, institutions rapidly multiplied with the increase in immigration. Ironically, patterns of social stratification on the basis of European regional origin persisted, this time expressed as antipathy between "Germans" (particularly Bavarians) and "Poles" (mainly Poseners). This situation was due in part to existing prejudices imported from the Europe and in part to class differences rooted in wealth and acculturation, which factors were, of course, in turn related to date of arrival – with the advantage to the Germans. Poles and Germans also had different religious customs and traditions, for instance, in their pronunciation of Hebrew. Though not substantive, these differences were meaningful links to the past and thus added to the barriers between the two groups. Throughout the antebellum era, Leon Jick explains, "[e]ach succeeding wave of immigration brought a repetition of the pattern. The bewildered newcomers of one decade became the solid and settled gentry of the next .... Soon each nuance of difference in European background or American experience was providing a reason to form a new organization."[12]

Not surprisingly, Jews in small towns mostly avoided this duplication of institutions. Two or three Jewish families from Alsace would find their commonalities with two or three other families from Bavaria more salient than their differences, given the greater difference between them and the much larger Christian population. This did

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[11] Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman, The Transformation of the Jews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 159-61.

[12] Barkai, Branching Out, 95-99; Diner, Time for Gathering, 26-27; Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 25.

not mean, however, that Jews in the small towns were free of conflict. Rather, the negotiation of differences required strategies of cooperation and (sometimes grudging) concession – it was simply unfeasible for one faction to walk out and set up elsewhere. In Madison, Indiana, for instance, controversy between Jews of different religious inclinations over the proper form of worship in the town's one congregation resulted in a compromise which cost one rabbi his job, but which created space for co-existence until the passage of time muted the sources of difference.[13]

A critical factor in the success of American Jewish communities large and small was the continued support and involvement of the wealthy elite. In Germany, Avraham Barkai notes, "many of the most successful wealthy Jews converted or severed all ties with the Jewish community." In America, however, the parallel group became important communal leaders and philanthropists, cultivating a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards other Jews. But because there was no existing elite of wealth or culture such as German immigrants encountered in the older East Coast cities, social status, and therefore leadership, was more fluid in the new communities of the Midwest. This was especially true in the small towns, where, given their concentration in a narrow range of storekeeping activities, the Jewish communities were on average much more homogeneous economically than those in the cities. Occasionally, a situation existed where *noblesse oblige* operated in a small town. In Madison, for instance, it seemed obvious that Gottlieb Wehle, older, wealthier, and well-educated, should be president of

[13] This controversy is the topic of Chapter Five of this Part.

the newly-formed congregation in 1853. In tiny Pomeroy, Dr. August Mayer took the leading role.[14]

In one very important respect, the experience of German Jews settling in cities and small towns was the same: they shared a pragmatic, "grass-roots" approach to communal organizing. Two factors shaped this approach. One was structural. Since the European religious elite was less likely to emigrate, migrants in the United States found themselves thrown onto their own resources to create institutions. For Jews from devout, but poor and uneducated backgrounds, these resources were primarily the same "street smarts" that were serving them well in American business. A second factor was psychological. Though they yearned for continuity and comfort, immigrant Jews could not recreate the Jewish institutions of their European homelands. The voluntarism inherent in the United States' separation of church and state left space for individualism in a new way. Responding to social and cultural conditions around them by "creating a network of organizations, clubs, charities and lodges, American Jews bridged the Jewish and the American ways of life by establishing mediating structures that organically and creatively, if haphazardly, linked the new with the familiar and the sacred with the profane."[15]

In the cities, multiple "mediating structures" provided multiple opportunities for Jewish expression. In their pragmatic way, German Jewish communities first addressed

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[14] Barkai, Branching Out, 82-83; Elizabeth Weinberg, "Bernhard Felsenthal's Madison," Indiana Jewish History 24 (October 1988), 18; re Pomeroy, Israelite 5:30 (January 28, 1859), 238.

[15] Re structural factors: Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 40-43. A vivid contrast can be made to the development of the American Catholic Church in response to an influx of Catholic immigrants during this same period. In addition to financial support, American Catholics could draw on the resources of an educated and well-disciplined cadre of priests and nuns from Europe and (increasingly) the United States. The diocesan structure dictated local organization. See Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, Religion in America (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 141. Re psychological factors: Diner, Time for Gathering, 88.

the most exigent demands of Jewish life, so often the first institution organized by newcomers was an association to provide Jewish burial. These associations were often dubbed "benevolent societies," a concept that blended the traditional *chevre kadisha* (burial society, but literally, "holy society") with the imperative of *gemilut chasadim* ("doing acts of benevolence," of which providing burial is foremost). The benevolent society's role was then expanded to include public worship, education, poor relief, social events and other needs, and it was supplemented by specialized organizations – synagogue, school, and lodge. Based on this, Diner emphasizes the role of benevolent societies as "transitional institutions," creating a site for Jewish association in the process of providing critically important social needs, and laying the groundwork for future institutional ramification.[16]

This certainly held true in the cities of the Ohio River Valley. In Louisville, for instance, the earliest Jewish associations were benevolent societies founded in the 1830s. The first synagogue, Adas Israel, was incorporated in 1842; its first building was erected in 1850. Other institutions quickly followed, including a B'nai B'rith Lodge in 1852 and a branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association in 1864. In Pittsburgh, Jews began in 1846 to discuss organizing; the next year, they founded the Bes Almon Society to provide cemetery plots and burial rites, and the year after that, the city's first synagogue, Shaare Shomayim.[17]

There is evidence that the benevolent society was the first Jewish institution in small towns of the Ohio River Valley as well. In Owensboro, Kentucky, Jews were

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[16] Diner, Time for Gathering, 94-99.

[17] Herman Landau, Adath Louisville: The Story of A Jewish Community (Louisville: H. Landau and Associates, 1981), 9, 181; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 19.

meeting informally as a community by 1859, and in 1862, eighteen families, under the name of the Hebrew Benefit and Burial Society of Daviess County, purchased a cemetery. This *hevra kadisha* was also the worship community until 1878, when congregation Adath Israel, as successor to the Benefit and Burial Society, built a permanent synagogue. In Paducah, Kentucky, the *hevra kadisha*, named Chevra Yeshurum, was organized in 1859 and acquired a cemetery property. After the Civil War, Chevra Yeshurum also took on the role of synagogue. In 1868, it sponsored High Holiday services for the first time, meeting in a room above the dry goods store run by Manfred Livingston, and in 1871, reorganized itself as congregation Kehillah Kodesh Bene Yeshurum. Wheeling's Congregation Leshem Shomayim traces its inception to 1849 with the formation of a cemetery association and purchase of a section of the city's Mount Wood cemetery.[18]

In many other communities there was a period of informal association that preceded the establishment of a congregation, and though these precursors may not have been chartered as benevolent societies or called by that name, they almost certainly functioned as such. In 1855, a Jewish resident of Portsmouth, Ohio, reported to Isaac Leeser, editor of the Philadelphia-based Occident, that Jews there had organized a congregation. Three years later, in September 1858, a congregation of a dozen families formally constituted itself as "Kal a Kodesh Beneh Abraham, or Holy Congregation of the Children of Abraham." Similarly, in January 1859, the Israelite reported that the Jews in Pomeroy, Ohio, had formed a congregation. Not until February 1868 were

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[18] Re Owensboro: Lee Shai Weissbach, "Stability and Mobility in the Small Jewish Community: Examples from Kentucky History," American Jewish History 79: 3 (March 1990), 360. The name change may have come as early as 1865. Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), s.v. "Kentucky." Re Paducah: Isaac W. Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah: Temple Israel, 1912), 29, 56, 62, 69. Re Wheeling: Levi, "Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim," 8.

incorporation papers filed for "Ohave Scholom Church." Jews in Cairo, Illinois, made provisions for Jewish burial as early as 1853; a congregation was organized a decade later.[19]

In many towns these informal associations also functioned as worship communities, meeting in members' homes or business buildings; gradually various community functions were coordinated under the aegis of a congregation. In Wheeling, informal worship may have preceded the organization of the benevolent society in the mid-1840s, but only in the early 1860s did the congregation, Leshem Shomayim, achieve some regularity of meeting schedule and location. In Evansville, Indiana, informal *minyanim* met beginning about 1850; Congregation B'nai Israel was formalized in 1857.[20]

The ad hoc nature of communal organization meant, of course, that not all communities fit the pattern of *hevra kadisha*- to-congregation. Not only was a burial society not invariably the first step, but some small communities skipped that step altogether. In 1864, the Frank and Emsheimer families took the lead in organizing a

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[19] Re Portsmouth: Occident, 13:7 (October 1855), 369; "Portsmouth, Ohio—Dedication – Lectures," Israelite, 5:25 (December 24, 1858), 199. Founding trustees were Louis Levi (president), Ludwig and Jacob Stern, Bernard Dryfuss, Mayer Eichelstein, Isaac Freiberg, and Mayer Seeburger (a clerk at Levi and Mayer) (from Certificate of Incorporation, Congregation Bene Abraham file, AJA). Re Pomeroy: Israelite 5:30 (January 28, 1859), 238. Officers were president Dr. August Mayer, vice-president Wolf Herzog, secretary Aaron Blumenthal, and treasurer Samuel Silverman. Ohave Scholom Church, incorporation papers February 19, 1868, copy from Meigs County Recorder's Office, provided by Margaret Parker, Meigs County Historical Society. Mayer, Blumenthal and Silverman were again listed as officers, as were Max Herzog, Simon Silverman, Bennett Baer, and Herman Faller. Re Cairo: "The Jews of Illinois – Part Second – Jewish Communities Outside Chicago," Reform Advocate 21:11 (May 4, 1901), 378.

[20] Re Wheeling: Levi, "Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim, Wheeling, West Va.," 13. In 1859, the Deborah (4:25 [February 4, 1859], 197) reported that Wheeling had a Jewish charitable organization as well as the congregation, though it is not clear this was a separate organization. Re Evansville: 100th anniversary booklet, Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana, 1957 (AJA), 1. In 1860, the Occident (10:47 [February 16, 1860], 281) reported that B'nai Israel had 41 members. Although the congregation almost immediately purchased a parcel of land, there were no funds for a building, so services and meetings continued to be held in second-floor rooms over various stores.

congregation in Gallipolis, Ohio. But the congregation never had its own cemetery in town. Some of the town's Jews were buried in Cincinnati, others in nearby Portsmouth. One might infer that the failure to provide a cemetery expressed some lingering sense of being "temporary" in town, yet among those buried in Cincinnati were members of the Moch and Frank families who remained in Gallipolis for a long time. In the same year that they organized their own group, Gallipolis Jews also contributed to the building of the synagogue in Portsmouth. The Jewish infrastructure was built over space as well as over time.[21]

Often there was a parallel organization to the benevolent society specifically for women. Women, who could not be formal members of the congregation, were linked through these organizations, often called "auxiliaries," which performed both general welfare work and specific tasks, especially fundraising, for the synagogue.[22]

It is difficult in most cases to date the inception of these women's organizations, for they tended to organize informally before incorporating or taking other formal steps. Not infrequently the women's group antedated the congregation, sometimes it was more or less contemporaneous. In 1865, two dozen women in Wheeling organized a Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society to provide social welfare and educational services and to raise money for the congregation. In Pomeroy, Ohio, the women's auxiliary filed

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[21] Re congregation's founding: Israelite 11:13 (September 23, 1864), 101. Re lack of cemetery: Henny Evans, Gallia County Genealogical and Historical Society, communication with author, February 3, 1995. For burials in Portsmouth, see, inter alia, Beneh Abraham (Portsmouth, Ohio), Congregational Minute Book, entry for October 1878 (AJA). Moch family burials in Cincinnati include Leopold Moch in 1854 and Rosa Baer Moch in 1862 (Moch Family, Genealogies File, AJA), and Harry Frank in 1900 (obituary, Gallipolis Daily Tribune, September 17, 1900:1). Re contributions to Portsmouth synagogue: Israelite 10:35 (February 26, 1864), 277.

[22] Diner, Time for Gathering, 96-97, 99.

incorporation papers a few months after the congregation was formed in 1868, though it is probable that they had already been meeting.[23]

The "separate but equal" status of the women's organization is evident from the fact that the leaders were often spouses of male congregational leaders. Membership was probably as large, or larger, than the men's groups. The Portsmouth Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Association in 1861 had 27 members, as many as there were men in the congregation. As with the men, membership in a local organization linked women to the larger Jewish community, as, for instance, when the Portsmouth women contributed to a fundraising drive organized by Cincinnatians for a widow and orphans home for the Midwest.[24]

For some German Jewish immigrants, religion remained a distinctly secondary concern, and new, American forms of Jewish organization developed to express a secular identity. Of all the non-religious national Jewish organizations, B'nai B'rith was without a doubt the most important in the nineteenth century, with its reach extending to small communities across the United States.

B'nai B'rith was founded in 1843 in New York City by a group of young immigrant German Jewish men who initially had come together on a purely social basis –

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[23] Levi, "Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim, Wheeling, West Va.," 16; Incorporation papers for Hebrew Lodge [sic -- Ladies] Benevolent Association, April 15, 1868, copy from Meigs County Recorder's Office, copy made March 31, 1869. Provided by Margaret Parker of Meigs County Historical Society.

[24] Stanley R. Brav, "The Jewish Woman, 1861-1865," American Jewish Archives 17:1 (April 1965), 50, 52. In Portsmouth, on average, one woman from each family joined the Ladies Benevolent Association. Perhaps a few women whose husbands were congregation members did not join, and probably some women not related to congregational members did. For organizational leadership of married couples, see, e.g., Pomeroy, where founding officers of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Association included Caroline Silverman (Samuel's wife), Sophia Baer (Bennett's wife), Esther Silverman (Simon's wife), and Mina Mayer (August's wife).

to drink together at Sinsenheimer's saloon on Essex Street. Some of the men were members of general American fraternal orders – the Masons and the Odd Fellows – but they still desired an organized fellowship with other Jews. (Other Jews had been rejected by these groups.) It was a fellowship outside of the synagogue, however, that they desired, since at the time religious issues in American Judaism seemed to be the source of as much (or more) conflict as of brotherhood.[25]

As historian Deborah Dash Moore points out, B'nai B'rith represented a "radical conception" of Jewish community. "Judaism, the old fraternal society, was failing in the new world, the men at Sinsenheimer's agreed. The time had come to rebuild the ancient Jewish fraternity, modeled not on the antiquated religions of the past but on those of the future: the new fraternal orders in the United States." The order was to be modeled on the Masons, with such trappings as secret greetings, insignia, and regalia, but with reference to specifically Jewish symbolism. For instance, the president was called by the title Grand Nasi (Hebrew for "prince"), which was the title in ancient Israel for the head of the highest Jewish court.[26]

B'nai B'rith thus amalgamated Jewishness and Americanness to create a secular alternative for immigrant Jewish men, a "synthesis of humanist Jewishness and ethnic secularism." Practically speaking, in the highly mobile society of antebellum America, it provided a network of contacts for Jewish young men on the make, and in a society without governmental social services or a full-developed insurance industry, it provided valuable disability and death benefits, and eventually a network of old-age homes,

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[25] Deborah Dash Moore, B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 1-6.

[26] Moore, B'nai B'rith, 7. For the term Nasi, see Robert M. Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 250.

orphanages, and hospitals open to all Jews. Soon it became involved in the defense of Jewish interests abroad.[27]

By the 1860s, there were lodges across the entire country, in large and small cities and towns. Cincinnati's first lodge was founded in 1849, Louisville's in 1852, and Pittsburgh's in 1862. Lodges were founded in Evansville, Indiana, in 1860; Madison, Indiana, in the 1860s; Cairo, Illinois, in 1867; Paducah, Kentucky, in the 1870s; Owensboro, Kentucky, in 1874. In the cities, B'nai B'rith's innovation and importance was in providing a neutral ethnic "turf" for Jewish fraternization. This was no doubt part of the appeal in small towns as well. But equally important was the way in which affiliation with a national organization provided a window onto the larger Jewish world and an opportunity to participate in national Jewish affairs.[28]

As the first secular Jewish organization in the United States, B'nai B'rith had a complex attitude about involvement in cultural and (especially) religious activity. Many sponsored programs of Jewish education for adults and children, Jewish libraries, and lectures on Jewish topics, and some lodges soon became involved in sponsoring religious observances even though the initial goal had been to transcend that. In Paducah, Kentucky, it was the B'nai B'rith lodge, founded in 1870, which spawned both men's and women's committees which re-organized the *hevra kadisha* into a full-scale

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[27] Moore, B'nai B'rith, 7-33; quote on p. ix. The defense work was later consolidated into one B'nai B'rith agency, the Anti-Defamation League.

[28] Cincinnati: Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 44; Louisville: Landau, Adath Louisville, 181; Pittsburgh: Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 42; Evansville: 100th anniversary booklet, Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana, 1957 (AJA), 2; Madison: Directory of the Lodges and Officers of the Independent Order of B'ne [sic] B'rith ([New York]: N.p., [1900]), 6; Cairo: "The Jews of Illinois – Part Second – Jewish Communities Outside Chicago," 378; Paducah: Directory of the Lodges, 6; Owensboro: Weissbach, "Stability and Mobility," 360.

congregation, Bene Yeshurum. In Cairo, Illinois, B'nai B'rith managed the Jewish cemetery.[29]

Though aimed at a different demographic group, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, like B'nai B'rith, was primarily socially and culturally Jewish rather than religious. The YMHA movement was instigated in the 1850s to provide a Jewish setting for young men's leisure activities, on the American associational model of the Young Men's Christian Association. In larger cities such as New York and Philadelphia, the YMHA had an expansive mission to provide opportunities for education, socialization, and physical fitness; branches in smaller cities and towns usually served primarily as social clubs. In Parkersburg, West Virginia, a YMHA was founded in 1869 primarily as an ethnic social and educational club and aid society for "thoroughfaring co-religionists." Again like B'nai B'rith, some YMHAs sponsored Jewish education and religious observances, even including synagogue worship, and the Parkersburg group also offered its club space for religious services to those who desired to organize them.[30]

There is no evidence that anyone took them up on their offer. In the Parkersburg community, numbering at least fifteen families, ethnic identity and secular affiliation were apparently more compelling than religion. The YMHA led to the organization of a Hebrew Society in 1875, but it was made it clear that this was not, strictly speaking, a **Jewish** benevolent society, preferring to raise and distribute funds for general community

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[29] Diner, A Time for Gathering, 111. Re Paducah: Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley, 56-61. Re Cairo: "The Jews of Illinois," 378.

[30] Diner, Time for Gathering, 107-8; Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), s.v. "Young Men's Hebrew Association"; re Parkersburg: Israelite 15:37 (March 19, 1869), 6. The YMHA was one of the influences on today's Jewish Community Center movement. For the history of the YMHA and the influences on its development, see David Kaufman, Shul with a Pool: The "Synagogue-Center" in American Jewish History (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 1999), 51-88.

charity, "without regard to sect or nationality." Whether under the auspices of the Hebrew Society or not, Parkersburg Jews did, by the 1880s, meet in private homes for High Holiday services, but there was no formal congregation until 1909.[31]

B'nai B'rith's "commanding position" in American Jewish life, confirmed by 1873, was due to its status as the only effective and truly national Jewish organization. Being a member of B'nai B'rith provided instant recognition among other Jews around the country. Likewise, though in terms of national scope, B'nai B'rith definitely "furthered the transformation of German Jewish immigrants into American Jews by providing in its lodges socioeconomic and psychological security," the transformation of immigrants into **small-town** American Jews was furthered by B'nai B'rith's public, external role as a parallel to other fraternal orders, providing additional legitimacy and validation to Jewish identity. The same was true, to a lesser extent, of the YMHA and other Jewish fraternal orders.

Hasia Diner notes that for many immigrant Jews, belonging to a B'nai B'rith lodge or benevolent society "often substituted for" normative religious practice and affiliation. But the appearance of this phenomenon in such an extreme in Parkersburg provides the exception that proves the rule with respect to small towns. While some small portion of a town's Jewish community might choose to affiliate only with non-synagogal organizations, the congregation was the center of Jewish life. As indicated earlier, some of this was a need to avoid duplication of effort, but other factors were also at work. In the social structure of small-town America, it was the synagogue, as a

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[31] Re Hebrew Society: Parkersburg State Journal, January 21, 1875: 4. Re High Holidays: Historical Hand-Atlas . . . . Outline Maps and Histories of Wood and Pleasants Counties, West Virginia (Chicago: H.H. Hardesty, 1882), 226. The matter of Parkersburg's unusual organizational history will be discussed in Part III.

parallel to the Protestant churches, which best expressed and legitimated Jewish identity in America, in the eyes of both Jews and Gentiles.[32]

In the vast majority of the Ohio River Valley's small towns, the dominant Jewish institution was the congregation, and local recognition among fellow Jews was a function of congregational leadership. Specialized organizations for men, for women or for young people were de facto adjuncts to the central focal point of the synagogue. And the congregations themselves were more than just religious institutions, with their activities including mutual aid, philanthropy, and Jewish education. The congregation was **the** address of the Jewish community in the small town, regardless of the individual Jew's level of religious observance; congregations were "centers of communal organization . . . conveying sentiments of security and group identity."[33]

Religion became a major marker both of Jewish separateness and of Jewish sameness. Jews were immigrants and non-Christians, but they understood Judaism as essentially compatible with American life and undertook to nurture both.

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[32] Diner, Time for Gathering, 87-88.

[33] Barkai, Branching Out, 101.

## CHAPTER FOUR: REFORMING JUDAISM FOR AMERICA: CONFLICTS AND CONGRUITY

For three months in early 1860, Rabbi Max Del Banco of Evansville, Indiana, had a running feud in the Jewish press with a congregant who detested the rabbi's liberal religious ideas. The Occident, a defender of Jewish orthodoxy, had reported on the Evansville community, touting its orthodoxy, based on the report of a local correspondent. Del Banco fired back in the pages of the moderately reformist Israelite. The community was by no means "orthodox," he wrote; "all [of the approximately 40 members] follow and admire the principles of reform, except one or two." It was one of those exceptions – "somewhat the only Orthodox here" in Del Banco's opinion – who had written to the Occident. Unfortunately, the Occident's dissenting correspondent was also the congregation's secretary.[1]

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[1] Occident 10:47 (February 16, 1860), 281; Israelite 6:35 (March 2, 1860), 275. Del Banco, who came from a Sephardi family, was born in 1825 in Hamburg (Letter from A. Irma [Mrs. Samuel S.] Cohon to Jacob R. Marcus, "Del Banco, Max," Biographies File, AJA). Since Hamburg was one of the earliest centers of early Reform Judaism, it is possible that Del Banco was influenced by its spirit while a young man in Europe. Del Banco came to Evansville in the fall of 1859 from LaPorte, Indiana (Occident 17:36 [December 1, 1859], 216).

The exchange of letters was only one battle of an ongoing war. Del Banco charged that "orthodoxy despises any thing that relates to common sense, but admires only blind belief in outworn ceremonies and hereditary laws and customs." The secretary, the pseudonymous "Judah," accused the rabbi of "vanity" in promoting an agenda shared by no one else; he also commented sarcastically on "how fond Mr. D. is of delivering his reform sermons, which, as he boasted, every body admires, and all of which may be read first in the [radical reform journal] Sinai." He added darkly that despite his pseudonym, he suspected that Del Banco knew exactly who he was.[2]

"As long as I will be preacher and teacher here," Del Banco pledged, "orthodoxy will have little to boast upon." In spite of his bravado, though, he had to admit that "[a]t present . . . our service is conducted according to old custom, but this, I hope, will alter soon." What altered soon was his employment; he left Evansville probably that same year.[3]

Many communities in the mid-nineteenth century were roiling with debates over the direction of American Judaism. They were part of a centuries-long response to the conditions of modernity and, more specifically, part of the new response to the conditions of America.

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[2] Israelite 6:35 (March 2, 1860), 275; Occident 17:52 (March 22, 1860), 309-10, and 18:8 (May 17, 1860), 45-46.

[3] Israelite 6:35 (March 2, 1860), 275. Re Del Banco's tenure: "100th Anniversary, Washington Avenue Temple, 1857-1957, Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana," Histories File, AJA. The letter from Mrs. Cohon to Jacob Marcus asserts that Del Banco was killed in 1864 in the explosion of a steamboat returning him to St. Louis after he conducted High Holiday services for Jewish soldiers in the Union Army at Vicksburg. However, according to data in biographies of Del Banco's daughter, this could not have been the case; he died no earlier than June 1865. See Jewish Encyclopedia IV: 503, s.v. Delbanco, Miriam. This article is based on Isaac Markens, The Hebrews in America: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches (New York: self-published, 1888), 208-9.

The beginnings of what is known as the Reform movement in Judaism, are, in the words of historian Michael Meyer, "best traced in the gradual rise of sentiment favoring proposals for doctrinal or practical religious reform prompted by increasing exposure to the world outside the ghetto whose values and demands, gradually accepted and internalized, were perceived to conflict with the inherited tradition." Reform Judaism was not an assault launched by heedless assimilationists against a solid and faithful traditionalism; religious change was inextricably entangled with the promises, imperatives and perils of civil emancipation and social integration.[4]

The breakdown of traditional Jewish communal authority in early modernity and the increased acceptance of Jews by Gentile intellectual and cultural progressives had created a crisis of identity which, as Meyer contends, "severely disoriented" the urban Jewish elites. Facing defections and alienation from the community, many Jewish leaders became convinced that the new conditions of life called for new attitudes and actions. On the one hand, as Jews came closer to civil and social equality, it was imperative to validate Judaism to Christians, to prove Jews' ability to be fellow citizens and comrades. On the other hand, it was also imperative to validate Judaism to **Jews**, to provide an option so that the choice between modernity and Jewish allegiance was not so stark. In large part, religious reform was driven by a concern to keep Jews Jewish.[5]

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[4] Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), x. For European reform, see 69-71 above.

[5] Meyer, Response to Modernity, 13. For the transition to modernity, see Jacob Katz, Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); for the crisis of identity, see Steven Lowenstein, The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Deborah Hertz, "Seductive Conversion in Berlin, 1770-1809," in Todd Endelman, ed., Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 48-82.

German Jewish religious intellectuals of the early nineteenth century aspired "to rethink the Jewish faith in a way that would justify [in both political and intellectual realms] its persistence alongside Christianity." Under the influence of contemporary philosophy, these intellectuals reconceived Judaism as a creation of history, an ongoing process through which essential, universal truth would be revealed. They became convinced that Judaism's natural development had been unnaturally inhibited by the persecutions of unenlightened medieval Christianity. The essential spirit of Judaism had been suffocated for these many years and now it was possible to release it. Judaism thus had a great and glorious future as a beacon to all mankind, a prospect that they linked to the Biblical concept of Israel as *ohr la-goyim*, a light to the nations.[6]

In line with this broader view, traditional Jewish concepts were thoroughly revised to emphasize universalism rather than particularism. This transformation accomplished several things. First, it validated the acceptability of Jews as citizens of the nation-state. German Jews were Germans, with no expectation of a literal return to Zion or the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty there; the traditional prayerbook was edited to remove, for instance, prayers for the re-establishment of the Temple sacrifices. The Biblical messianic hope was reinterpreted as a goal, Judaism's mission to redeem the world. This new universalism also staked a claim for the relevance of Judaism to contemporary society. The essence of religious faith, these thinkers agreed, was morality, and nowhere were moral truths better expressed in Jewish terms than in the writings of the Biblical prophets. From the prophets, they excavated a perspective

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[6] Quote: Meyer, Response to Modernity, 62. For analysis of and excerpts from the debate, see Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 155-206.

emphasizing universal religious truths and moral teachings and locating religious authority in reason and conscience, rather than in law.

This new (for Judaism) conception of religion focused on the personal subjective religious consciousness, so the task of organized religion was *Erbauung*, the "uplift" of the individual consciousness. Congregations began to pray, and rabbis to deliver sermons, in German, to increase the intelligibility of services. Organs and choral music were introduced to create an atmosphere of devotion; traditional male headcoverings were discarded. Worship services were shortened and the second day of holidays, except for Rosh Hashanah, abolished. Especially in the cities, home to a growing Jewish bourgeoisie, these new practices coincided with an overall change of manners that subtly shifted Jewish preferences to a more subdued religious style. For both ideological and practical reasons, the watchword of the era was "decorum."

By the 1840s, the intellectual project of reform in Germany was beginning to coalesce into a movement. It was a widely diverse movement, ranging from radical anti-rabbinism to moderate change based on *halakhah*, but the contours of a mainstream reform were beginning to emerge: use of the vernacular and of organ and choir music in liturgy; a lenient attitude toward the dietary laws; affirmation of core practices such as circumcision; and rejection of the most radical proposals, such as those to make Judaism conform to modernity by observing Sabbath on Sunday. One could find rabbis and lay people across the spectrum.[7]

In addition, of course, there was always a third voice in the conversation: the German state governments and what they would or would not permit. In Germany,

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[7] Meyer, Response to Modernity, 132-42.

Jewish religious decisions and development remained constrained by Gentile politics. But this was not the case in the United States, which would turn out to be, in Meyer's phrase, "the Reform movement's land of promise." Like the biblical Israelites' entry into their promised land, however, it was not to be a smooth journey.[8]

The interplay of influences in the development of Reform Judaism in the United States has been the subject of ongoing debate among scholars. Until the mid-1970s, historians emphasized the initiative of an intellectual, largely rabbinic elite in the formation of Reform and tended to see the movement as a German transplant. Nathan Glazer's American Judaism, first published in 1957, portrayed Reform as the accomplishment of rabbis who immigrated to the United States in the 1840s and 1850s where they found "a large and fertile field for their reforming labors." Likewise, Henry Feingold in 1974: "The seeds of the Reform movement were carried to American shores by a group of rabbis, who were part of the German Jewish migration . . . . From the point of view of the social conditions of American Jewry, the prospects for the kind of innovation advocated by the Reform movement were good."[9]

In 1976, Leon Jick re-examined the question from the standpoint of social history, looking at what actually went on in nineteenth-century American synagogues. In The Americanization of the Synagogue, he argued that changes in religious practice were

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[8] Meyer, Response to Modernity, 103, 225 (quote).

[9] Nathan Glazer, American Judaism, 2nd ed., rev. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 32; Henry L. Feingold, Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present, rev. ed., (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1981), 100-101. Abraham Karp reiterated this view as late as 1987: "Overview: The Synagogue in America – A Historical Typology," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1987), 10.

created by immigrants' own pragmatic responses to specific American social and economic conditions, rather than by their acceptance of any ideological program propounded by rabbis. (He brings to bear many compelling narratives of communal conflict.) The significance of religious reform lay in the German Jewish immigrants' "attempts to redefine their religious and cultural ideas in the new setting, and to restructure a communal apparatus that would enable them to enter fully into American society while preserving links with the Jewish tradition of which they continued to feel themselves a part." Since Jick's path-breaking work, further examinations of the nineteenth-century German Jewish immigrant experience have confirmed much of his argument that Jewish immigrants took the initiative to create a middle-class religion to fit their up-and-coming middle-class economic and social status.[10]

But a more satisfactory analysis of this process builds on a distinction introduced by Jick. "Apparently even when German-Jewish immigrants were prepared to consider introducing reforms," he notes, "they remained chary of Reform." That is, the laity was comfortable with making changes that seemed appropriate to their circumstances, but until the late nineteenth century they had no desire to institutionalize this process into an ideological movement. It was the rabbis who created the institutional structures of American Reform and who translated the philosophical ideas of the German reformers into an American idiom. As Naomi Cohen puts it, "two streams fed concomitantly into the development of American Reform, one pragmatic and one philosophical . . . . Like all movements, Reform Judaism needed both leaders and followers. In America neither group was passive, nor were the two independent of each other." This synthesis of

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[10] Leon A. Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870 (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1992), xiii.

American and Jewish identities was the democratic creation of both laity and rabbis. The Ohio River Valley would be an important site of this activity, becoming a vital center of institutional Reform Judaism.[11]

In the early years of the German immigration, change was not a favored concept. The immigrants had already changed their homes, their language, their surroundings; they wished their synagogues to be "the stronghold of the familiar and unchanging." Private practice, of course, was subject to pressures of economic necessity and social convenience and was shaped mainly by pragmatic criteria. Some foundational practices, especially circumcision, were almost universal. Enough people still observed the dietary laws that many communities retained a *shokhet* to provide for kosher meat. A surprising number in the mid-nineteenth century maintained *mikvaot* for observing the laws of marital sexual relations. Shabbat posed a particularly difficult problem, since merchants were under competitive pressure to open their stores. A pragmatic attitude could bridge

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[11] Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 87; Naomi Cohen, Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 164-65. The important distinction between "modernization" and "Americanization" – and the identification of democracy as the hallmark of the latter process – is underscored by Hasia Diner in "Jewish Self-Governance, American-Style," American Jewish History 81 (Spring-Summer 1994): 277-95. For a description of earlier events in the United States that created the context for Jewish developments, see Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). An abortive attempt at ideological religious reform in the United States was made in 1825 by a young, Americanized faction within congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, a bastion of Sephardi-rite traditionalism founded in 1750. The manifesto of the renegade Reformed Society of Israelites bore some resemblance to principles of German Reform philosophy. But the independent driving force was the desires of a younger constituency: mostly native-born, intellectuals, professionals and civil servants as well as merchants, active in politics and civic affairs. Although the separate organization soon withered, the experimenters became part of a faction that led Beth Elohim in the 1840s to pioneer more sweeping changes. Though not a direct predecessor to later American Reform, the religious changes made by the Reformed Society in response to their perception of the conditions of American freedom adumbrated the changes that German Jews eventually made as well (Meyer, Response to Modernity, 228-35). For more on Charleston, see Robert Liberles, "Conflict Over Reforms: The Case of Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina," in Wertheimer, ed., American Synagogue, 274-96. For an analysis of how the Americanization of Judaism expressed itself in the development of institutions, see Alan Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840-1930 (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1994).

the gap: "[a]lthough traditionalists saw Sabbath observance as an all-or-nothing proposition, ordinary American Jews probably picked and chose from among the restrictions and rituals." But even if – or maybe especially because – their personal observance waned, they clung to traditional liturgy, language, and behaviors in the synagogue.[12]

Communal life was chaotic. Unable to attract rabbis from Europe, most American Jewish communities would have to rely for quite some time on non-ordained functionaries, men whose reputations and level of Jewish learning varied considerably – though generally both were very low. They were "jack-of-all-trades" Jewish professionals – *chazan, shochet,* and often *mohel* rolled into one. Most did not – and could not – provide strong guidance, and laymen continually challenged their authority. Even many of the attempts by the indefatigable – and decidedly superior – Isaac Leeser to arouse interest in Jewish culture and education were, though accepted by Leeser's Sephardic community, rejected by the Germans as *chukkat ha-goyim,* forbidden imitations of non-Jewish practice. The first two ordained rabbis to appear in the United States in the early 1840s, Abraham Rice and Leo Merzbacher, were made miserable by the congregations that hired them.[13]

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[12] Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 45-57 (quote on 47); Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 127-40 (quote on 133). This pragmatic approach to religious observance was not unfamiliar to many German Jewish immigrants, especially those from the villages. Contrary to stereotypes, it was in many German villages not the poorer, less educated Jews who were the most traditionally observant. Rather, strict observance tended to be the prerogative of the wealthy who could afford to take the time away from work for regular prayer and study and who could engage Hebrew teachers for their children. See Werner Cahnmann, "Village and Small Town Jews in Germany: A Typological Study," Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 19 (1974), 120.

[13] Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 58-78. Rice quit his Baltimore pulpit after nine years and went into business. Merzbacher suffered an early death. Leeser was born in Germany, came to the U.S. in 1824 and served as *chazan* in Sephardi-rite congregations. Based in Philadelphia, he was an astoundingly active writer, publisher, educator, translator, and organizer – a seemingly bottomless well of resources for the

The 1850s was a critical decade for American Judaism. It was a period of tremendous growth, partly from natural increase, but even more so from a wave of immigration in the wake of Europe's revolutionary disturbances in 1848. Among these immigrants were rabbis who hoped to transform American Judaism. Communities were changing rapidly and intra-communal conflict was inevitable. Grass-roots institutions such as benevolent societies and B'nai B'rith were somewhat immunized against internal conflict, "since no group had a stake in the maintenance of one kind of structure over another." But religion was another story. In Diner's view, most conflicts occurred when "an ideologically oriented elite, worried about the underlying dilemmas of the conflict between modernization and tradition," faced off "against a pragmatic laity that **only** wanted to see results." But pragmatism was not the only issue. The resistance of some ordinary Jews to reformist pressure came also from deep-seated religious emotions and from the desire to retain traditions in a new and rapidly changing environment. The stage was set for battle.[14]

Madison, Indiana, was one such field of battle. Madison's Jews, who had been meeting informally for worship probably as early as 1849, organized Congregation Adath Israel and a school in 1853. They dedicated a small synagogue in September 1855. Initially, the congregation was a do-it-yourself proposition: Joseph Dinkelspiel (late of Louisville and Marietta) served as *chazan* and *shochet* for a time, as did A. M. Hoffstadt, whose store building hosted the synagogue on its second floor. Then in January 1856,

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struggling American Jewish community of the antebellum era. See Lance Sussman, Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

[14] Diner, A Time for Gathering, 113. Pragmatic reform in the Ohio River Valley will be discussed in the next chapter.

the congregation advertised in Die Deborah, Cincinnati's German-language newspaper, for a full-time, all-purpose Jewish functionary: a chazan and schochet also able to teach children Hebrew, German, religion and Bible history. Thirty-four-year-old Bernhard Felsenthal was soon engaged.[15]

Felsenthal's appearance in Madison was fortuitous. When he immigrated in 1854, he headed for Louisville, Kentucky, where his brothers were already living. Trained as a teacher in Germany, Felsenthal first moved to Lawrenceburg, Indiana, upriver nearer Cincinnati, to serve as tutor to the children of the Adler family. From Lawrenceburg, he left for Madison in March 1856. By then, the community had about fifteen families. The men – that is, those who were eligible, and therefore likely, members of the congregation – were mostly in their mid-30s; almost all had immigrated from German states or Alsace in the late 1840s and early 1850s.[16]

Felsenthal had both a traditional Jewish education in his hometown in the Rhineland as well as secular (though not university) training. As a student and later as a teacher in a small-town Jewish school, he was exposed to the ideas of religious reform percolating throughout German Jewish society. Arriving in the United States, Felsenthal attached himself publicly to the Reform cause. He polished his English language skills and began to publish his views, religious and political, in the Jewish and secular presses, in both English and German. Felsenthal's intellectual role model was Rabbi David

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[15] Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio -- A History of Madson's Indiana Jews," Indiana Jewish History 27 (July 1991), 1-47. The community *mikveh* was located behind the store. Re Felsenthal's appointment: Deborah 1:22 (January 18, 1856), 176, and 1:37 (May 2, 1856), 302.

[16] Bernard Felsenthal, Nearprint File, AJA. Felsenthal might have known the Adlers in Europe: he visited them in Lawrenceburg while travelling between Cincinnati and Louisville only a few months after arriving in the U.S. Bernard Felsenthal, "Notes from a Trip 1854-1857," AJA; Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites," 23a-23b, 26a-26b.

Einhorn, a radical reform rabbi in Baltimore known for his uncompromising stances; while in Madison, Felsenthal started writing for Einhorn's journal Sinai. In March 1857, also from Madison, Felsenthal published a three-part series on Reform in Die Deborah, which reveals much about the nature of Jewish religious discourse in mid-nineteenth century America. The clash between the rabbi and his congregants was part of the process of the creation of new models of American Jewish leadership and of a democratic American Jewish laity.[17]

Felsenthal's Deborah articles purport to be a report of congregational debates on his suggestions for liturgical reform in Madison. The first article, dated March 13, 1857, starts by portraying a small but feisty community. The congregation was "among the smallest in the western United States" – there were fifteen male members – but it held regular services and classes for children. There were monthly congregational meetings, with many "fruitful discussions." At one such meeting on February 1, 1857, Felsenthal (by his report) took the floor to propose changes to the young congregation's mode of worship. Noting that in recent months, services had occasionally been cancelled for lack

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[17] Felsenthal's biographer-daughter could only guess about much of his life in Europe, but she is probably correct that he learned about the reform ideas and activities from newspapers such as the Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums (Emma Felsenthal, Bernhard Felsenthal: Teacher in Israel [New York: Oxford University Press, 1924], 15-17). For likely general influences during Felsenthal's youth, see Steven Lowenstein, "The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement," in The Mechanics of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 88-92. Re attachment to Einhorn: Felsenthal, Bernhard Felsenthal, 21. In fact, Felsenthal was one of only two "intellectually significant sympathizers" that Einhorn was able to attract in his first few years in the U.S (Meyer, Response to Modernity, 249). For a bibliography of Felsenthal's publications, see Felsenthal, Bernhard Felsenthal, 283-354. There is no small irony in the fact that "[t]he internecine religious struggle for the hearts and minds of America's Jews dominates the nineteenth-century Jewish papers which, for the most part, were edited by feuding rabbis who seldom failed to abuse their theological rivals while preaching the necessity for Jewish unity" (Robert Singerman, "The American Jewish Press, 1823-1983: A Bibliographic Survey of Research and Studies," American Jewish History 73 [June 1984], 423).

of attendance, he promoted the worthwhile aims of regular worship: not just community continuity, but personal edification and uplift.[18]

Felsenthal thought he had a solution to the problem of apathy: a program of thorough-going religious reform. "One could," he explained, "raise an objection to me: 'You speak of edification, instruction, and improvement through worship. But our customary worship doesn't edify or instruct or improve me. Its language is foreign, its form is repulsive and tasteless, the eternal repetitions [of prayers] are tiresome, [and] its excessive length enervates the spirit rather than elevating it. Moreover, it is in large part based on opinions and convictions which our contemporaries no longer believe. What should I do in such a worship service?' Gentlemen, to the one who confronts me with such a comment, I must [say] without embarrassment that you're right." Felsenthal was convinced that the lack of interest in religious services was attributable to a sort of liturgical arteriosclerosis. Jews no longer understood Hebrew and did not know the meaning of the prayers, making true devotion impossible. Likewise, the length of the traditional service should be curtailed in order to promote "devotion and solemnity"; a long service presses people to hurry through their prayers "like a high wind." A shorter service would also permit time for a sermon, which Felsenthal considered "an essential part of divine service."[19]

The form of the liturgy was not the only issue Felsenthal raised; content concerned him as well. Modern Jews should drop all "notions, views, hopes [and]

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[18] Deborah 2:30 (March 13, 1857), 237. My translations from the German.

[19] Deborah 2:30 (March 13, 1857), 237-38. Felsenthal relies on a principle articulated in a twelfth-century German rabbinic text (*Shulchan Arukh, Orakh Chayyim*, 1) that permits abbreviated prayers "in a time of urgency" (*be-sha'at ha-dechak*). He apparently generalized an urgency from the fast pace of American life and the threat of assimilation.

wishes" which are not part of modern belief, such as the desire for the restoration of the Temple sacrifices. If a remodelled form will increase devotion, a philosophically consistent content will reveal the truth of "our lofty Israelite religion, the most beautiful on the whole wide earth." By emphasizing the "eternal teaching" of "virtue and morality," Jews would demonstrate their standing "as members of an eminent people before other religious societies."[20]

Felsenthal was careful to a point to base his arguments on precedent. He invoked not only traditional rabbinic sources, but all the sages of the Bible and Talmud: "Neither Avraham Avinu [Abraham our Father] nor Mosheh Rabbenu [Moses our Teacher], neither Shlomo ha-Melekh [King Solomon] nor Eliyahu ha-Navi [Elijah the Prophet] ever said a single passage of our entire Tefilah [prayer] . . . and I think all of you would agree that Mosheh Rabbenu was a good Yehudi [Jew]." Abraham never davenned Shacharit [the morning prayer], Felsenthal continued, and Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir never said all the piyyutim [hymns] contemporary Jews did.[21]

But Jewish tradition was not his only point of reference. The context of modern life was equally important. Since its earliest German origins, religious reform already had a proud history in some of "the greatest and most cultivated European congregations" and "the greatest Rabbis" support it. In the United States, there were a "respectable number" of reforming congregations in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Albany, Baltimore and Charleston. "Wherever thinking and enlightened Israelites live together," Felsenthal proclaimed, "they take into account the progress of the time in religion." He

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[20] Deborah 2:30 (March 13, 1857), 238.

[21] Deborah 2:31 (March 20, 1857), 242. Of course, anti-reformers argued that the Rabbis never intended such permissions as use of the vernacular or shortening the service to be permanent changes. They were for emergency use only.

urged that his congregation "show the world that we here in Madison are, though few in number, great in our intentions and full of holy zeal for our divine Judaism, that also thinking and enlightened Jews live [here] . . . ." Finally, Felsenthal made his suggestions for the specifics of the Sabbath service. It would follow the outline of the traditional service, but with some sections read in German, additional responsive readings, a half-hour sermon, and a few omissions. Felsenthal wanted women as well as men counted to the minyan.[22]

The reaction to his proposals was immediate and, predictably, divided. One member – disguised for the article as Mr. X – immediately expressed his horror at Felsenthal's ideas. "Should someone like this be teaching Judaism [lit., Yiddishkeit] to our children?!" Mr. X exclaimed, branding all reformers "goyim." Mr. Y then spoke up in Felsenthal's defense. The report of the remainder of the debate so thoroughly covers the exposition of the traditional position, and so elegantly delineates the reform refutation, that one is tempted to attribute a fair amount of editing to Herr Felsenthal. His words may be in the mouths of his defenders, but the narrative retains a sense of personalities that seems true to life.[23]

Mr. A, a "radical," took Felsenthal's logic to its extreme, proposing the abolition of Hebrew entirely, even for the Torah reading. This extremist statement permitted Felsenthal to emphasize his reverence for tradition, how he "deliberately" retained some Hebrew for its emotionally uplifting, even mystical, power. Others expressed their additional reasons: to protect the integrity and authenticity of the Torah, to retain a bond with Jewish communities around the world. When Mr. A suggested that "Hebrew is

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[22] Deborah 2:31 (March 20, 1857), 243.

[23] Deborah 2:31 (March 20, 1857), 243.

indeed one of Jewry's embracing bonds, but the weakest of all" – superseded by a common monotheistic faith – "the zealous [Mr.] X" went ballistic.[24]

But we must pray only in Hebrew, Mr. X insisted, for "whole worlds depend on a single letter." That is why the tradition requires one to correct a scribal error in a Sefer Torah immediately. Against this mystical understanding, Mr. Z made the rationalist's argument that this practice is simply for the sake of ensuring accuracy. This drove Mr. X to further paroxysms: " . . . the existence of whole worlds is conditional on each vowel, the angels of Heaven employ each little stroke . . . . Get me away from your newfangled things – they are all sins!" On the issue of counting women to the minyan, Mr. X is, of course, opposed. Everyone knows this idea is wrong, he asserts. "Didn't you read this just a few days ago in the Deborah?"[25]

At this point the article becomes uncomfortably personal. X's assertion is greeted with laughter and snide comments. Mr. Y, "who attended a Latin school for two years as a youngster, said 'O sancta simplicitas! [Oh simple faith!]'" Retorts X, "Mr. Upsilon, you have offended me. What are you doing, rebuking me in Latin? You said yesterday that I was an old blockhead [Ger., *Ochs*] – a decent man would say 'orthodox' – **you** are a blockhead." Here Felsenthal permitted himself a sarcastic aside on the intellectual quality of the opponents of reform: they made arguments from tradition "of which the Poskim [rabbinic legal authorities] had never in the least dreamed. Perhaps we should

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[24] Deborah 2:32 (March 27, 1857), 253.

[25] Deborah 2:32 (March 27, 1857), 253. In the March 13 article (237), Felsenthal cited a rabbinic text (*Shulchan Arukh, Orakh Chayyim* 101) that permits fixed public prayers to be recited in any language if one does not understand Hebrew.

publish the insights of our learned theologians, never before heard in front of a large audience." One can almost hear the smirk on his face.[26]

The remainder of the debate, including the question of a triennial versus annual Torah-reading cycle, was similarly unproductive. Felsenthal even admitted that many in attendance were bored by the proceedings, accusing them of insensitivity to anything except "bread and amusements." During the course of the conversation, Mr. E had made it clear that he would rather be playing cards than discussing religion.[27]

Though Felsenthal reported at the end of his third article that the congregation called an additional meeting for further discussion, no account of that meeting (if indeed it was held) appeared. Despite his portrayals of support, Felsenthal's arguments were ultimately unpersuasive. Frustrated, he left Madison in 1858 for the greener pastures of Chicago, where he forged a remarkable and long career as a Reform rabbi (despite his lack of formal ordination) and early American Zionist.

The Madisonians were used to Felsenthal attracting controversy. Six months earlier, in the fall of 1856, he had ruffled the feathers of his congregants with his public advocacy of John Fremont's presidential candidacy on the ticket of the new, "free soil" Republican party. The Madison Daily Evening Courier reported the dispute and commented that "freedom of speech and Mr. Felsenthal were sustained." Sympathetic, like-minded rabbinic colleagues encouraged Felsenthal's assertiveness. The recalcitrance of the Madison congregation was only temporary, an East Coast friend advised him; just

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[26] Deborah 2:32 (March 27, 1857), 253.

[27] Deborah 2:32 (March 27, 1857), 253-54.

as the sun traveled from east to west, reform would inevitably progress across the country.[28]

Without other evidence, it is impossible to determine exactly who in the Madison congregation supported Felsenthal and who opposed him. One of Felsenthal's partisans was almost certainly Michael Frank, at whose home the rabbi boarded. Felsenthal lost an almost certain potential supporter within a few months of his arrival in Madison, when Gottlieb Wehle, the titular and de facto head of the community, moved to New York City. At the same time, Wehle seems to have been able to act as a peacekeeper in the community. Indeed, the congregation's resolution of tribute, published in the Israelite upon Wehle's move to New York City in April 1856, credited him with dispelling "the former disunion and discord" in the community (perhaps the flap over Felsenthal's politics?).[29]

Wehle and his extended family added a unique element to the Madison Jewish scene. The relatives – twenty-six members of the Wehle, Dembitz, and Brandeis families – had immigrated to the United States together and most of them settled in Madison, judging that the town had the potential to rival Cincinnati and Louisville as a regional power on the Ohio River. Gottlieb Wehle and Adolf Brandeis built a cornstarch factory.

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[28] Madison Courier is cited in Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Adas Israel's First Teacher – Bernhard Felsenthal," Indiana Jewish History 24 (October 1988), 26. Letter to Felsenthal from Moritz Mayer, rabbi in Charleston, S.C., quoted in Victor Ludlow, "Bernhard Felsenthal: Quest for Zion" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1979), 23. Mayer and Felsenthal had been students together in Munich in the late 1830s (Felsenthal, Bernhard Felsenthal, 13).

[29] Re Felsenthal and Frank: Ludlow, "Bernhard Felsenthal," 12, 23. Frank and Felsenthal apparently shared the acquaintance of Moritz Mayer. Item re Wehle is quoted in Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio," 39.

which soon failed, but their second business, a grocery and produce business, was quite profitable.[30]

The families' socio-economic background was far different from that of other Madison Jews. The Wehles were not village Germans, but a wealthy, even aristocratic old Jewish family from Prague. They were also Frankists, remnants of a mystical Jewish sect with overtones of messianism. Though the sect had originally engaged in some rather dubious esoteric practices, by the nineteenth century what remained was a theology of antinomianism, a sense of being engaged in the noble cause of "revolt against petrified orthodoxy and the obscurantist fanaticism of the rabbis." This revolt clearly had assimilationist implications. Wrote Gottlieb Wehle's son in the late nineteenth century, his forebears had found in Frankism "a tonic influence, a refreshing impetus in a system of mystic idealism that opened an almost boundless prospect of intellectual and moral expansion. To break with Judaism was impossible, to give it a higher and broader significance was the only way open to them." Thus, the Frankists were intrinsically inclined to support of the reform movement.[31]

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[30] Josephine Goldmark, Pilgrims of '48 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 195-225. At first, they had a romantic notion of setting up a farming colony in the Midwest, but soon realized the impracticality of the idea. The title of Goldmark's book refers most directly to the author's father, who had been a liberal political activist as a student. As Bertram Korn points out, "The Brandeis-Wehle clan . . . were by no means 'Pilgrims of '48' in the sense of being political refugees. Economic opportunity in the new world was undoubtedly an important motivation in their leaving Prague" ("Jewish 48'ers in America," American Jewish Archives 2 [June 1949], 5).

[31] Quotes from Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), 170. The families' life in Europe, including their literally unorthodox religious life, is discussed in detail in Goldmark, Pilgrims of '48, 176-95. Specifically, the family had been followers of the charismatic and bizarre Jacob Frank, who was active in central Europe in the eighteenth century. Frank saw himself as the inheritor of the messianic soul of the eccentric Shabbetai Tsvi, who caused massive unrest in seventeenth-century Jewish Europe and Mediterranean with his visions of messianic redemption (for which see Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973]). Sources on Frankism in English are few. Arthur Mandel's The Militant Messiah, or Flight from the Ghetto: The Story of Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979) is not particularly well-written, and has a very obvious agenda: to attack and "debunk" Hasidism and all

This tendency never had a chance to play out in Madison, however. By 1856, deciding that the town was not living up to their expectations, Wehle and his extended family left. Some members of the family went back to Europe; others dispersed to American cities, including Louisville.[32]

In numbers and wealth, the Wehle-Brandeis family may have had a high profile in Madison, but the rest of the Jewish community was more conventional. Of the seventeen men who were likely to have been the nucleus of the congregation, eight were Alsatians, five Germans (or Bohemian, in the case of Gottlieb Wehle), two Prussians and two Russians. If the Prussians were actually Poseners (which is likely), then the background of most of them was probably rather conservative. But though several had been in the United States for only two or three years, eight of them had been in the country for at least seven years. Most of these men were in their mid-to-late thirties and early forties; most were married and had at least a few children. They earned their livings largely as peddlers, tailors, and clothing dealers.[33]

What this profile suggests is that many Madison Jews were still in transition, working their way up the economic ladder and building families. In this respect, Felsenthal's comment about "bread and amusements" is most telling. Felsenthal was an

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related mystical movements. See also Harris Lenowitz, The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 167. Lenowitz says that most of the important works on Frank are still not translated into English.

[32] Goldmark, Pilgrims of '48, 233-43. Wehle is still known today as the author of an ethical will that is the latest documentary evidence of the continuation of the sect's ideas: the will is translated and discussed in Scholem, Messianic Idea, 167-75. The echoes of Frankism continued into the twentieth century: Gottlieb Wehle's grand-nephew (his sister's grandson) was Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who had a "sacred portrait" of Jacob Frank's daughter (a token given to special insiders) as a gift from his mother (Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 175).

[33] Data collated from Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio"; "Adas Israel's First Teacher"; "August 3, 1855 – The Dedication, Synagogue in Madison, Indiana," Indiana Jewish History 21 (August 1986), 11-22; "Visitor's Tour, Madison, Indiana's Jewish Community, 1849-1923," Indiana Jewish History 23 (April 1988), 1-17.

intellectual. His fellow immigrants were men who worked hard and, apparently, relished their opportunities for relaxation. Moreover, the status quo was a safe course for a community too small to support more than one congregation.

The Reform that would eventually appeal to most immigrant German Jews was not based on lofty philosophy. It was an Americanized Judaism that took its cues from the realities of the immigrants' lives, responding to their new sensibilities as they entered America's middle class. By the 1870s, Madison's Adath Israel was an exemplar of this mainstream moderate reform, following the leadership of Isaac Mayer Wise.[34]

The sort of radical reform that Bernhard Felsenthal unsuccessfully marketed in Madison did find a home in another Ohio River Valley town specifically **because** of that town's location within the Valley, that is, because of its connections with the eastern seaboard and because of its isolation from the rest of its own state. In Wheeling, Virginia (later West Virginia), physical, social, and political geographies converged to make the town into an early stronghold of radical Reform Judaism.

The physical link between the cities of Wheeling and Baltimore was forged by the National Road in the first third of the nineteenth century and strengthened by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in the middle third of the century. In the 1820s, use of the National Road momentarily pushed Baltimore ahead of Philadelphia as the second-largest city in the United States. The road also put Wheeling on the map both literally and metaphorically. Livestock, coal, and other commodities flowed to and through Baltimore

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[34] The Madison congregation adopted Wise's prayerbook Minhag America in 1869, and participated in the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. Weinberg, "Adas Israel's First Teacher," 32; Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations I, 1873-79 (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., 1879), 8, 15. There will be more about Wise and his approach to reform in the next chapter.

and Wheeling in impressive quantities, as did human traffic. Many European immigrants heading for the West chose to enter the United States at Baltimore to take advantage of access to the Road. With the immigrants and migrants, writes the foremost authority on the Road, "came ideas and institutions that they would employ to fashion a new human geography on the trans-Appalachian landscape."[35]

One feature of this new human geography, of course, was the Jewish settlement on the Ohio River. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were close to twenty Jewish families in Wheeling. The viability of Wheeling's Jewish community depended on the commercial viability of the city, which in turn depended on remaining in the transportation loop as railroads supplemented (and then replaced) the National Road. The connections between the physical geography of the Ohio River and the built geography of the National Road and then the B&O Railroad closely determined the cultural geography of Jews in this corner of Virginia.[36]

The personal connection of Jews in Wheeling to Jews in Baltimore was strong. Many Wheeling Jews had entered the country at Baltimore and stayed there for some time. There was a branch in Wheeling of Baltimore's Wiesenfeld & Co. department store, operated by a member of the family. Abraham Sonneborn, an 1846 immigrant who

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[35] Quote: Karl Raitz, "The Face of the Country," in Karl Raitz, ed., The National Road (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 62. For the National Road, see 105 above; for the B&O, see 115. For the pioneering role of the B&O and its impact on the city of Baltimore, see John F. Stover, "Baltimore and Ohio Railroad," in Robert L. Frey, ed., Railroads in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 20-22; also Zane L. Miller, The Urbanization of Modern America (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 18.

[36] Re Wheeling population: Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958 (n.p.: n.p., 1963), 1327-31. Incidentally, two Jewish businessmen, Solomon Etting and Jacob Cohen, Jr., were among the first directors of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (Isaac M. Fein, The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920 [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971], 17, 22). Etting's second wife was Rachel Gratz, whose father Barnard had considerable interests in the colonial Ohio River Valley.

moved to Wheeling in 1860, was older half-brother to Henry Sonneborn, who became extremely wealthy in clothing manufacture in Baltimore during and after the Civil War. (Before the war, Henry had a clothing store in the northwest Virginia – now West Virginia – town of Fairmont.) Commercial intercourse between the two Jewish communities was common. The communities were linked not only by family and business connections, but also by what a nineteenth-century writer might have called a harmony of sentiments. Wheeling Jews adopted ideas from Baltimore's Jewish cultural milieu, choosing a model of Americanization that fit hand-in-glove with the ideological life of their new city.[37]

Among the cultural influences traveling the Baltimore-Wheeling route was the radical reform Judaism associated with Rabbi David Einhorn. Einhorn came to the United States in 1855 to be rabbi of Baltimore's Congregation Har Sinai. Forty-six years old then, and already an experienced rabbi and scholar, Einhorn was a meticulous, uncompromising, take-no-prisoners intellectual. He exalted the universalism of the

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[37] For the Wiesenfelds, see Fein, Making of An American Jewish Community, 90-91. Abraham Sonneborn arrived in Baltimore from Hesse in 1846 at the age of 32, apparently by himself (Passenger lists of vessels arriving at Baltimore, 1820-1891 [National Archives microfilm publications, microcopy no. 255, roll 5]). He and his wife moved to Wheeling after fourteen years in Baltimore. At least two of his sons continued in the clothing and dry goods business in Wheeling and married women from the local Jewish community, continuing the family connections between the cities. Henry Sonneborn immigrated with another brother in 1849 at age 23. Basing himself in Baltimore, he peddled in southern Pennsylvania for two years before opening the Fairmont store. He used family members to operate similar stores in other towns. In 1860 he moved to Baltimore to concentrate in clothing manufacture (Sonneborn, Henry, SC-11768, AJA). Also Sonneborn Family, Genealogies File, Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore. For more on Henry Sonneborn's business, see A History of the City of Baltimore, Its Men and Institutions (Baltimore: "Baltimore American," 1902), 172-73. Social interactions between Wheeling and Baltimore are evident from, e.g., notices in the Jewish press. For example, an item in the American Israelite in 1879 (33:4, July 25) mentions several Baltimore women visiting friends in Wheeling (6).

The relationship between Baltimore and Wheeling was suggested in Rabbi Harry Levi's 1899 history of Leshem Shomayim, written on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Levi commented that change seemed to have come quickly to the congregation in the 1860s; perhaps, he opined, "the war spirit rampant for four long years, with its creation of an intense American spirit, contributed to the changes . . . by rousing the members to the determination to Americanize as it were their services . . . ." Levi also commented that "a number of the members . . . were accustomed to making frequent trips to Baltimore" where, possibly, "they became imbued with the reforming spirit at work" at Congregation Har Sinai ("A Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim" [Wheeling: Bullard Printing House, 1899], 14).

essential idea of Judaism – ethical monotheism – and emphasized the Jewish mission to carry this message to the world. Revelation, Einhorn taught, is progressive; therefore the revelations articulated through the Talmud and *halakhah* in their time are no longer binding. Jews should pray only those words and practice only those customs that they completely and rationally believed; emotions and tradition were not sufficient criteria. He also argued that American Jews should retain a strong attachment to the German language, not for its own sake, but as the spiritual language of progressive religion.[38]

This ideology was something of a specialty item, and Einhorn's direct influence in America was rather limited: Har Sinai had only about seventy member families while he was rabbi there, from a total Jewish population of about 7,000. His indirect influence was mediated largely through the careers of his close rabbinical colleagues and disciples and his lay supporters in Baltimore and beyond. Wheeling's connections with and similarities to Baltimore promoted Einhorn's influence in the Ohio River Valley.[39]

One critical commonality was a sense of "borderness." Baltimore's location oriented it economically to north, south, and – via the railroads – west; its political bifocality corresponded to this economic bifocality. Maryland was deeply split by the slavery crisis into an antislavery west and a proslavery east and south. Baltimore, in the middle geographically, was influenced by both positions, though only there did a strong anti-slavery sentiment exist. In 1861 the secession crisis threw the city into chaos; it was

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[38] Meyer, Response to Modernity, 244-50.

[39] Fein, Making of an American Jewish Community, 18, 38-41, 93.

symptomatic that the first bloodshed of the Civil War occurred during riots against federal troops there in April 1861.[40]

The debate raged as well in Baltimore's synagogues. Rabbi Bernard Illoway, of the traditionalist Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, was a significant national Jewish voice in favor of slavery and secession. At the moderately traditional Oheb Shalom, Rabbi Benjamin Szold (who had himself only arrived in the United States in 1859) went to great – even extreme – lengths to preserve Jewish neutrality on the sectional dispute. At Har Sinai, and in the pages of his newspaper, the Sinai, Einhorn vociferously preached a gospel of abolitionism and unionism.[41]

Einhorn's outspoken views gained both strong adherents and equally strong enemies. Many German Jewish immigrants were not yet quite comfortable enough in America to feel that their safety as Jews could never be in jeopardy if they were deemed a social irritant; as a result, Jews as a community determined to maintain "self-imposed rules of political neutrality." Politics was a purely individual pursuit; anything that hinted at a group position, such as formal pronouncements from rabbis, was anathema.[42]

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[40] Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox, eds., Maryland: A History, 1632-1974 (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1974), 334, 413. Baltimore was a leader in the clothing industry even before the Civil War, at which time the industry was becoming dominated by German Jews. For sectional debate: Anita Guy, Maryland's Persistent Pursuit to End Slavery, 1850-1864 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 59-68. Guy does not mention Einhorn. See also Carl Bode, Maryland: A Bicentennial History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), and Robert J. Brugger, Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

[41] Isaac M. Fein, "Baltimore Jews during the Civil War," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 51 (December 1961), 69-75; Bertram Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 20-23, 26. Bernhard Felsenthal, like his role model Einhorn, was an outspoken abolitionist (Korn, 22-23).

[42] Fein, Making of an American Jewish Community, 83-97; Cohen, Encounter with Emancipation, 129-58. For a fascinating look at Jewish attitudes, see Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 15-55. Many Jews were suspicious of the relationship of abolitionism and Christianity. This was a legitimate concern: see James Brewer Stewart, Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996); Ronald Walters, The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Douglas M. Strong, Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious

Within Har Sinai, devotion to Einhorn's principles was strong, but even the rabbi's most ardent supporters were wary of being too demonstrative to the outside world about their opinions. Einhorn was impervious to these worries. In 1861, as riots ripped Baltimore, he fled to Philadelphia under threats from anti-abolitionist agitators. Deeply frightened, his congregation refused to consider his return unless he would adhere to their policy of public silence on political matters. Einhorn of course refused. Outraged at what he perceived as Jewish cowardice and abandonment of Judaism's moral mission, he was proud to have been forced out of Baltimore.[43]

Einhorn's ideas, though controversial in Baltimore, fit well into the social-political-cultural matrix that Jews occupied in Wheeling. In January 1859, Augustus Pollack addressed an adulatory letter from Wheeling to the Sinai, announcing that the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Wheeling had elected Einhorn to honorary membership. This almost certainly reflects continuing close connections between Wheeling's Jewish community and Congregation Har Sinai. Although no records from Har Sinai are extant from before 1854, records from the 1850s and 1860s include family names that also appear on the rolls of Congregation Leshem Shomayim in those same decades.[44]

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Tensions of American Democracy (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999). There are some intriguing parallels, though, between the perfectionism underlying Christian abolitionism and Einhorn's understanding of the importance of abolition. See Gershon Greenberg, "The Messianic Foundations of American Jewish Thought," Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies 2 (1975): 223, and "The Significance of America in David Einhorn's Conception of History," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 63 (1973): 182; Bernard Cohn, "David Einhorn," in Essays in American Jewish History to Commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Jewish Archives (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1958), 315-24.

[43] Korn, Civil War, 21-22; Fein, Making of an American Jewish Community, 98; Fein, "Baltimore Jews," 83-84; Greenberg, "Significance of America," 163-78.

[44] Sinai 4:1 (February 1859), 26-27. Har Sinai records are extant from 1854 on (Jewish Museum of Maryland). Family names from those records that also appear in Leshem Shomayim records include Sondheimer, Blimline/Blumlein, Seligman, Oppenheimer, and Hyman. Abraham Pollack (a rag dealer and mattress-maker turned successful furniture merchant) was an active member of Har Sinai; I cannot

The personal connections reinforced ideological connections. Wheeling Jews shared the Unionism that was implicit in Einhorn's messianic theology of America. They shared his dislike of slavery, though for them this translated into support of the Republican Party and its Free Soil platform rather than into Einhorn's perfectionist abolitionism. Both unionism and anti-slavery were also embedded in the politics of their German cultural milieu, a German culture which Einhorn exalted as the wellspring of Reform. In the immediate pre-Civil War decades, the same mechanics of geography – roads across the mountains – which exposed Wheeling Jews to Einhorn's ideology of American Reform also created the cultural and political conditions which made their choice of that ideology compelling.

Although Wheeling was by the eve of the Civil War the second-largest city in Virginia, it had always been an anomaly within the state, located as it is in a panhandle squeezed between Ohio and Pennsylvania. Like Baltimore, Wheeling felt its liminality. Politically located in the South, it was in all other ways part of the North: commercial and industrial rather than agricultural, supporting protective tariffs and government-funded internal improvements. Railroad politics was a significant component of northwest Virginia's growing dissatisfaction throughout the antebellum era, for supporters of northwest Virginia separatism understood the relationship between economics, transportation and ideology. No north-south roads or rails linked northwest Virginia to the Deep South or even to southern Virginia. In 1827, the Virginia assembly had vetoed the B&O's original plan for a southern Virginia route because it would make western

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determine his relationship – if any –to Augustus. Various Baltimore records for the late nineteenth century (also from the collection of the Jewish Museum of Maryland) include other names that appear in Wheeling in the mid-nineteenth century, including Wolfsheimer, Dillenberg, Eiseman, Rheinstein/Rheinstrom and Rice. Some of these names are fairly common, but others are not.

Virginia "the backyard to Baltimore" to the disadvantage of Richmond. Northwest Virginia, particularly Wheeling, however, was perfectly willing to be Baltimore's backyard and one of the Midwest's front doors.[45]

Additionally, northwest Virginia was demographically and culturally more typical of North than South, with migrants from New England and Pennsylvania and the highest percentages of European immigrants in the state. Probably half of Wheeling's immigrants, including, of course, virtually all its immigrant Jews, were German-born. Although, as in Maryland, there were significant political rifts in northwest Virginia, antislavery and unionism were deeply rooted. The area's unionist strongholds were the "rising towns" along the Ohio River and the B&O line. "Union men," a contemporary observer noted, "are the middle classes," and that was especially true of Wheeling's commercial and industrial elite. In the 1860 election, virtually all of Lincoln's Virginia support came from the Northwest, especially Wheeling.[46]

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[45] Re northwestern Virginia identity: John Alexander Williams, West Virginia: A Bicentennial History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 49. Western Virginians generally had shared a frustrated with the easterners' lack of interest in internal improvements in the antebellum era. But there were conflicts within the transmontane region: the southwesterners were uneasy with the northwesterners' identification with northern interests. Looking at this political landscape, the eastern powers in the Virginia assembly made a calculated compromise and settled on "a policy of purchasing Southwest Virginia's fidelity with internal improvements," specifically, a railroad from Richmond across the southern half of the state, which reached the Tennessee border in 1856. The project had the desired result, tying the southwest to Richmond through expanded commercial agriculture and strengthening the slave labor system. In 1861, the southwest voted with the east for secession. The Richmond & Tennessee railroad increased the northwest's sense of isolation from the rest of Virginia, but the eastern Virginians considered them a loss anyway. See Kenneth W. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), quote in this footnote on 17. Quote re "backyard to Baltimore": Charles H. Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), 125. Sarah H. Gordon, Passage to Union: How the Railroads Transformed American Life, 1829-1929 (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996) is a good survey of the broad social and cultural changes created by the rise of rail transportation.

[46] Williams, West Virginia, 50, 82, 84 (quotes). Before the Civil War, there were no prominent Republicans in northwest Virginia **outside** of Wheeling (Williams, 87). For more on the ethnic factors: Kenneth Nodyne, "Ohio County and the Election of 1860: A Preliminary Study," Journal of the West Virginia Historical Association, 4 (Spring 1980), 20-21. In 1850, Ohio County (of which Wheeling is the seat) had 22% foreign-born residents, and in 1860, 25%, the highest of any Virginia county for both years.

Reflecting the unique geo-politics of Virginia, these cultural and political differences were both the cause and the effect of serious sectional tensions within the state. In the long run, the cultural geography configured by these tensions was mapped onto the physical and political geography of the United States in the separation of western Virginia and the creation of the state of West Virginia. In 1861, Wheeling quickly took the lead in the fight against Virginia's vote for secession from the Union, and then in the Northwest's movement for secession from Virginia. Wheeling was the provisional state capital from 1863-1869.[47]

Wheeling's Jews shared the cultural and political proclivities of their city and welcomed opportunities to develop commercial interests at the nexus between South and West. They were urban dwellers, middle-class (or aspiring middle-class) businesspeople, and immigrant Germans – and therefore Unionists and Republicans. By 1860, Jews in the north were almost all Republicans; a German Jew was editor of Wheeling's German-language paper, the Republican Der Patriot. Those Jews from West Virginia who served in the army during the Civil War were all Federals.[48]

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(The next highest were 6.6% and 15.3% respectively; Richmond was 5.8% and 15.3%.) Figures calculated from data in United States Historical Census Data Browser (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/).

[47] For sectional tensions, see Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861. The dismemberment of Virginia and the creation of West Virginia involved byzantine political maneuverings, some of dubious constitutionality. In the spring, summer and fall of 1861, several conventions met at Wheeling to organize a provisional loyalist government, propose the creation of a new state, and write a state constitution: Congress approved statehood in December 1862, and statehood was finalized in April 1863. Lincoln issued the statehood proclamation once he had come to the conclusion that "there is still difference enough between secession against the constitution, and secession in favor of the constitution." See Isaiah Woodward, West Virginia and Its Struggle for Statehood, 1861-1863 (Baltimore: Wolk Publishing, 1954); Lincoln quote is on 28.

[48] Lawrence Fuchs, The Political Behavior of American Jews (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 35; Korn, "Jewish '48'ers in America," 11-15. The editor of Der Patriot was Ph[ilip?] Rapport (Carol A. Scott, Marriage and Death Notices of Wheeling, West Virginia, and the Tri-State Area, 1866-1870, Vol. 3 [Apollo, Pa.: Closson Press, 1988], 29). For immigrants, including Jews, who had come from Germany after the failures of the liberal revolutions in 1848, the Republican platform of "free labor, free soil and free

The story of the aforementioned Augustus Pollack illustrates this typical convergence of ethnic, geographical, political and religious factors. Born in1830 in the Rheinland, where his family traded livestock, Pollack left Germany during what his biography calls "the revolutionary and unsettled condition of 1848." Arriving at Baltimore, he clerked for a few years in a (non-Jewish) dry goods firm there. In 1852, he went out on his own, and in 1854 moved the business to Wheeling, as he stated in a biography, "[u]pon the solicitations of friends." He married Rosalie Weinberg, also a German-born Baltimorean, in 1855.[49]

During the Civil War, Pollack was in the Home Guard and helped to organize a German company of Wheeling volunteers for the Union army. He was a financial backer of Der Patriot, among other involvements in German cultural and expatriate political affairs. Although he did not himself run for office (since, his biography demurs, he "is in no sense a politician"), he was active in local Republican politics. He invested in local railroads and gave speeches in favor of tariff legislation.[50]

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men" was particularly attractive. The bond between German Jews and the Republican Party was also fostered by the considerable overlap of German ethnicity and party membership. In Wheeling, Lincoln ran best in the wards that had the largest German immigrant populations: in fact, "some of the Lincoln rallies were conducted partially or entirely in German" (Nodyne, "Ohio County and the Election of 1860," 16-21). The relationship of German Jews with other German immigrants will be discussed further in a subsequent chapter. Some Jews may have been among the 500 delegates to the anti-secession conventions, though none served as members of the Constitutional Convention. See list of delegates in Charles H. Ambler, et al, eds., Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia, 1861-1863 (Huntington: Gentry Bros., 1940), 59-60. Re soldiers: Fein, Making of an American Jewish Community, 99; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 27. Baltimore Jews split between Union and Confederate armies.

[49] George W. Atkinson and Alvaro F. Gibbens, Prominent Men of West Virginia (Wheeling: W.L. Callin, 1890), 769-71. Pollack emigrated with two other young men from his village: Herman Pollack, probably a brother or cousin, and William Schmitt. All three listed their occupation as "clerk" (Passenger lists of vessels arriving at Baltimore, 1820-1891 [National Archives microfilm publications, microcopy no. 255, roll 5]). In 1871, Pollack became a cigar manufacturer; his factory made the famous "Crown Stogie" cigars.

[50] Atkinson and Gibbens, Prominent Men of West Virginia, 770-71.

Although Pollack left Baltimore before Einhorn arrived, we know that he was a moving force in the Wheeling community's turn towards Einhorn's reform. He wrote the first communication to Sinai in 1859 and may have been the correspondent who reported about Leshem Shomayim in several subsequent issues. In the fall of 1862, the congregation reported on the introduction of liturgical reforms during the High Holidays. "Things are moving valiantly . . . . " reads the report. "[A] new spirit reigns . . . . From all sides resounds the cry: Forward!" The congregation confirmed its loyalty to Einhorn's reform in 1869 by adopting his heavily edited prayerbook, Olat Tamid, being one of only a few very small congregations to do so. The congregation also remained aloof from plans for a union of congregations proposed by Einhorn's ideological and personal foe, Isaac Mayer Wise.[51]

Wheeling's experience was an exceptionally stark example of the liminality of the nineteenth-century Ohio River Valley, its ties with Baltimore reflecting the Valley's southerness and its unionism reflecting its northerness. Coinciding with their unique experience of Americanization, Einhorn's Reform Judaism provided Wheeling Jews a mode of expression most appropriate to their unique local setting. In the rest of the Ohio

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[51] First communication: Sinai 4:9 (October 1859), 283-84. Re proposed liturgical reforms (introduction of an organ and choir): Sinai 7:9 (October 1862), 257-58. Quote: Sinai 7:12 [10?] (November 1862), 287. Since Har Sinai records are not extant before 1854, it is impossible to determine if Pollack was a member there when he lived in Baltimore. Re popularity of various prayerbooks: Meyer, Response to Modernity, 255. Most congregations preferred Isaac Mayer Wise's middle-of-the-road Minhag America. It is hard to determine which small towns used Einhorn's Olat Tamid; possibilities are the Indiana towns of Ft. Wayne (Ruth G. Zweig, The First Hundred and Twenty-Five Years [Indianapolis: Indiana Jewish Historical Society, 1973], 8), and Ligonier (Carolyn Blackwell, "Jews," in Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Connie McBirney, eds., Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience [Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998], though this source is a bit suspect). In both cases, the influence perhaps came from (surprise) Bernhard Felsenthal, who introduced Olat Tamid at Chicago's Sinai and Zion congregations. Though approached during the organization of the UAHC in 1874, Leshem Shomayim did not join until 1892, when radical Reform had become the standard of the movement (Levi, "Brief History," 22).

River Valley, as in Madison, Indiana (and as in most of the rest of nineteenth-century American Jewry), the answer was the moderate reform of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise.

## CHAPTER FIVE: REFORMING JUDAISM FOR AMERICA: MIDDLE-CLASS RELIGION IN THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

In December 1858, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati attended the dedication of a temporary synagogue in Portsmouth, Ohio, set up in space rented by the congregation in the Masonic building at Third and Washington Streets. Wise gave several talks during his stay in Portsmouth, propounding to a receptive audience of Jews and Gentiles his developing vision of a new American Judaism. Writing in the Israelite just before his visit, Wise averred that it was in the small towns like Portsmouth, those unique repositories of American values, where Jews were not "too much absorbed in business and pleasure pursuits," that American Judaism would flourish. In the small towns, he declared, American Jews were truly "wide awake for their religion."[1]

The centrality of the Reform synagogue in small-town Jewish life represented the culmination of a multi-faceted process of economic, social, cultural and religious change experienced by German Jewish immigrants. As Avraham Barkai points out,

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[1] Israelite 5:21 (November 26, 1858), 166. Wise expresses himself in charmingly colloquial American English with his use of the term "wide awake."

"'Americanization' took place 'en group,' as well as being a process of individual adjustment." German Jews were becoming middle-class Americans, and their religious ideas, aesthetic sensibilities, and notions about Jewish leadership were changing as well. The initial rejection of reform in Madison, and its easy acceptance in Wheeling, illustrate the complex interplay of social, ideological, and cultural factors in the process of change.[2]

Working out a modern, middle-class American Judaism to accompany their new middle-class status was a project shared by Jews in the small towns in the nineteenth century. Situated in the heartland of American Reform Judaism, and representing the Jewish accession to American respectability, the communities of the Ohio River Valley figured prominently in this project.

Part of the cultural backdrop to the generally eager spread of reform was the German Jews' search for a place in respectable middle-class American society. Economic success was only one component of their bourgeoisification. A derivative phenomenon of economic developments, middle-classness was in fact **primarily** social, historian Stuart Blumin argues, "represent[ing] a specific set of experiences, a specific style of living, and a specific social identity." Equally as important as acquiring economic security was acquiring middle-class attitudes and manners, those behaviors that would enable the individual and the group to be identified as part of respectable society.[3]

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[2] Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 102.

[3] Stuart Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 297. Since the 1960s, "respectability" as a value has sometimes seemed to be, ironically, not quite respectable. I use the term here in a very basic sense, i.e.,

These behaviors were essentially a performance of certain values. Karen Halttunen has demonstrated that an antebellum "complex code of genteel conduct," based on "the sentimental demand for sincerity," had by mid-century mutated into a set of fixed social forms that governed "a theatrical performance of gentility." Behavior defined the middle class, "a class with social borders clearly defined by detailed criteria of social expertise." With access to this class status available to (almost) anyone who would play by the rules, Richard Bushman concludes, domestic gentility and respectability "was one of the great democratic movements of the nineteenth century."[4]

For Protestant Americans, this cultural development took place over the course of more than a century, so respectability was a natural part of their middle-class life by the time most German Jews arrived in the United States; immigrants, then, were to an extent playing "catch-up." And American Protestantism – as a religion – had already come to terms with the new values. In the early eighteenth century, New England Puritans began learning to sing hymns in unison, rather than letting each person sing as he or she pleased while chanting psalms. By the end of the century, Congregational churches had begun to install organs and ornate decoration, inspired by the aesthetic of Anglicanism. In the nineteenth century, evangelical Christianity learned to accommodate respectability as well. Richard Bushman cites one observer who, in 1856, "looked back longingly to the time when the Methodists 'had no pewed churches, no choirs, no organs . . . ,'" a time when people dressed plainly and preachers were more passionate than elegant. This

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being worthy of others' respect. After the disrespect and indignities of Europe, Jewish immigrants (like all humans) desired to be treated with respect and with dignity.

[4] Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 196-97; Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 273. See also John F. Kasson, Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

observer regretted that "[a]s in every other denomination, Methodist churches came to be made up of well-dressed worshippers, sitting in beautiful structures, listening to educated ministers."[5]

The trajectory of nineteenth-century American Judaism is thus not surprising: Jews' adoption of gentility specifically was part of America's adoption of it generally. Since respectability, as an element of bourgeois manners, was based in perceptions, the synagogue – the public sphere that was within the vision of non-Jews – needed to shape the presentation of Judaism to outsiders. The buildings themselves were one aspect of this presentation; the contemporary Jewish press praised new congregational buildings that were "tasteful" or even "elegant." More important was the behavior within the synagogue. Among the earliest popular reforms were the English-language sermon – to demonstrate that Jews were not foreigners – and organ music – to demonstrate their cultivation of finer aesthetic sensibilities. The traditional Jewish public prayer style of lightly controlled chaos, spontaneity, and physical movement looked embarrassingly similar to the camp-meeting revivalism of lower-class American Protestants, a style that refined Protestants had abandoned. Jewish congregations enacted rules against talking during prayers, and used choirs and organ music to direct and enforce musical conformity.[6]

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[5] Bushman, Refinement of America, 177, quote on 347-48.

[6] Scholars have noted a similar pattern of changes in manners along with changes in class status in the case of Western and Central European Jewry. See for instance, Todd M. Endelman, The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979); Steven M. Lowenstein, The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family and Crisis, 1770-1830 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Phyllis Cohen Albert, The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1977); and Marion A. Kaplan, The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family and Identity in Imperial

At first, even those congregations founded in the 1840s as "Reform," such as Har Sinai of Baltimore and Emanu-El of New York, differed mainly in their emphasis on decorum and the image of the synagogue building; they retained such traditional practices as headcoverings and separate seating. But in the 1850s, more changes were accepted and change became more widespread. The "family seating" configuration signified Jewish acceptance of the American conception of the family as a place of warmth and refuge away from the harsh competitive world, replacing traditional modes of separating male and female spiritualities. The abandonment of traditional male ritual dress signified a modern model of Jewish manhood; covering the head as a token of respect and wearing a tallit were hopelessly "Oriental" practices, not suitable to gentlemen who knew enough to remove their hats indoors. Careful attention to principles of "decorum, order, devotion, and edification" would prove to middle-class American Protestant society that Jews could adopt genteel modern values as well.[7]

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Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The concern for aesthetic sensibilities was, of course, not entirely unrelated to the ideological underpinnings of reform (see discussion of *Erbauung* on 150, above).

[7] Re 1840s: Leon A. Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870 (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1992), 79-92. Michael Meyer points out that the immigrants of the late 1840s and 1850s had often had some exposure to moderate Reform in Germany; this accelerated the process of reform in America because they were sooner "up to speed" on such modernization. (Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988], 236). Re 1850s: Karla Goldman, Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 79-81, 84-92; Jonathan Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1987), 366. Kaufman Kohler called use of the *tallit* a form of primitive "fetishism" (Meyer, Response to Modernity, 273). Perhaps it was also seen as too feminine. Even in congregations that required male headcovering, there was an etiquette in favor of hats rather than caps. Some congregations that decided to forbid this practice had a transition period in which black skullcaps were an acceptable, inconspicuous interim substitute (Meyer, 252). The literature on male headcovering includes Alfred Rubens, A History of Jewish Costume (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1967) and Gotthard Deutsch, "Bareheadedness," in Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), 2:533.

Goldman has elegantly demonstrated how the concern for respectability was often expressed in gendered terms. The bourgeois expression of American feminine religiosity in church attendance was at odds with traditional female Jewish religiosity sited in the home. The separation of women (usually in a

It was not just Jews in the larger cities who demonstrated this concern for bourgeois respectability. By the 1850s, the culture of refinement had diffused from large cities to provincial centers and thence even to country villages; it had spread from the East Coast to the West, even in some of the earliest stages of settlement. As Timothy Mahoney has shown, by the late 1850s, the middle class in the towns of the Midwest had consolidated their social position by "structuring the booster system, developing a web of voluntary associations and fraternal society, professionalizing work culture, and constructing a life-style based on the more formalized system of behavior, social interaction, consumption, and language of Victorian 'gentility.'"[8]

The dynamic of class differentiation seen in the city was perhaps modulated in small towns, but the resultant cultural effect was the same. Some historians have argued that in fact, if anything, the contours of mid-century American culture would have put greater pressure on Jews in small towns. After all, "[s]mall-town life was America's norm," comments Robert Wiebe. In an atmosphere of overall homogeneity, "[p]eople of very different backgrounds accommodated themselves to this Protestant code which had

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balcony) in public worship seemed to imply a denigration of women's spirituality; it seemed to highlight, rather than diminish, attention to sex; and it reeked of "oriental" exoticism. The solution to these problems (as well as to the problem of conveniently converting purchased church buildings into synagogues) was so-called "family seating" (Goldman, Beyond the Synagogue Gallery, 2-4, 80, 94-120). Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) is the definitive analysis of the take-over of Protestant churches by females and feminine sensibilities.

[8] Bushman, Refinement of America, 383-90; Timothy R. Mahoney, Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 63. Mahoney studied the region of the upper Mississippi Valley, north of St. Louis. Development in that region would have been only somewhat later than in the Ohio River Valley.

become so thoroughly identified with respectability, and the keepers of the national conscience applied its rules with slight margin for the deviant."[9]

Religiosity was especially a cornerstone of regional culture in the trans-Appalachian West, including the Ohio River Valley. "The 'religious character' of a community was important on the frontier, at least to a certain literate and influential class of people," one historian notes. "The equation was direct and unmistakable: religion was morality and orderly behavior." Social acceptance and respectability could be achieved through affiliation with these institutions of social order. Thus, the formal congregations could do double duty for American Jews: serving their adaptation to American society as well as providing Jewish fellowship and connection with tradition.[10]

In the smaller towns as much as in the cities, Jews had to find a way to strike a balance between their various goals and needs. Jick suggests that immigrant Jews in the 1850s experienced a sort of cognitive dissonance: "vacillating between their determination to maintain tradition and their desire to introduce changes that would reflect the rising aspirations and new life styles of the membership." Valuing both Judaism and Americanism, they searched for a way to be proud, modern Jews **and** Americans.[11]

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[9] Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 304-9. He suggests that class issues were most salient in small towns during periods of rapid growth, and later softened by the increased personal contacts created by longer-term residence. Wiebe describes small-town society as a prelude to analyzing the economic, political and social challenges that would transform it (The Search for Order, 1877-1920 [New York: Hill and Wang, 1967], 2-4).

[10] Quote from Malcolm Rohrbough, The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 149.

[11] Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 151. Other immigrant ethnic groups also reconfigured their identity in terms that were appropriate for bourgeois America. For instance, mid-nineteenth-century middle-class Irish immigrants created a new ethnic Irish-American culture, which served a dual cultural purpose. On the one hand, this culture validated to the "Anglo" hierarchy that the Irish could be good

If one individual could be considered responsible for the resolution of the immigrants' cognitive dissonance, it would be Isaac Mayer Wise. "Wise was known everywhere in American Jewry," Michael Meyer notes, "a powerful force that moved sometimes in this direction, sometimes in that, but [that] was always driving toward some goal." Wise's goal, in the broadest sense, was the naturalization of Judaism to Americanism. He was the major figure in translating pragmatic reforms, a jumble of ideas and practices, into an organized Reform movement.[12]

Wise was born in Bohemia in 1819; although he had a smattering of both yeshivah and university education, he was largely self-educated and probably not formally ordained. With his wife and daughter, he arrived in the United States in 1846 and immediately immersed himself in the chaotic environment of the American Jewish community. On one notable occasion, this even became literally true: during his first rabbinate in Albany, New York, conflicts with the congregational president over their respective prerogatives led to a free-for-all fistfight in the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah.[13]

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American bourgeoisie (industrious, thrifty, sober, and self-controlled); on the other hand, it validated themselves to each other as good Irishmen (faithful Catholics, Irish nationalists, political Democrats, etc.). See Kerby A. Miller, "Class, Culture, and Immigrant Group Identity in the United States: The Case of Irish-American Ethnicity," in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, ed., Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 96-129.

[12] Meyer, Response to Modernity, 239. The full-length biography of Wise is Sefton Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism: The Life and Times of Isaac Mayer Wise (London: Littman Library, 1998). See also James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965).

[13] Wise tells his version of the Albany confrontation in his marvelously energetic Reminiscences, edited by his disciple David Phillipson (Cincinnati: Leo Wise & Co., 1901), 161-67.

Aggressive, entrepreneurial, and pragmatic (even perhaps sometimes opportunistic), Wise thrived in the free market of religion. He did not start with a rigid agenda of religious reform; on some matters he was traditional, and on some progressive, depending on how they served his larger purposes. Not an intellectual, he was nevertheless a quick study and prolific communicator. With seemingly limitless energy, he organized and proselytized; he was ever "the pragmatist, the salesman, the builder." Institutions, more than ideas, were his unique contribution. For almost fifty years, he was rabbi of Cincinnati's Bene Yeshurun congregation, and he was definitely the right man in the right place at the right time. When Wise arrived in Cincinnati in 1854, it was the third largest Jewish community in the United States (after New York and Philadelphia) and the largest in the West. From the up-and-coming bourgeois German Jewish culture epitomized by mid-nineteenth-century Cincinnati, Wise molded a new American Judaism and, through a network of publications and organizations, spread the word across the United States.[14]

Wise had a missionary's zeal for his dream of an American Judaism. He saw a population divided by European origin into different customs of Spain, Germany, Poland – *minhag sefarad, minhag ashkenaz, minhag polen.* What he wanted – and what seemed the obvious next step in the historical progress of Judaism – was a ***minhag America.*** Unlike the older practices, this new practice would express the essential compatibility of Jewishness and Americanness. Wise was concerned both with Jewish unity and with developing an American-Jewish synthesis, for these goals were really one. The sad state

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[14] Temkin has more generous view of Wise's theological abilities (see Creating American Reform Judaism, 156-61). In any event, Wise was not completely without principles, of course. He actually had a quite literal view of the origin and composition of the Torah (see Meyer, Response to Modernity, 240-41) and put great stress on the observance of Shabbat (see, for instance, Wise, Reminiscences, 157).

of American Jews was the heritage of their experience in Europe; with "no self-respect, no pride left," they were easily drawn into "a wretched imitation of Christian customs." "The Jew must be Americanized," Wise exhorted, "for every German word reminds him of the old disgrace . . . . The Jew must become an American in order to gain the proud self-consciousness of the free-born man." With this new consciousness, with a "Jewish patriotism," American Jews would be the first in modern times truly free to release Judaism's powerfully redemptive universal message into the world.[15]

Within a decade of arriving in Cincinnati, Wise had an impressive list of accomplishments. In his first year, he founded a newspaper, the Israelite, to further his goals of unity and reform. The Israelite carried news of Jewish communities from all over the United States and its territories, from communities of all sizes, no matter how remote their location. Through the Israelite's national circulation, he linked American Jews by drawing them into a sense of shared destiny and shared values, and subtly directed them towards religious reform. In fact, Wise's biographer Sefton Temkin asserts, "It would be hard to overemphasize the role played by the Israelite in establishing Wise as a leader of American Jewry." Temkin also points out that since he could travel by rail for free as a newspaper editor, his two modes of outreach – the newspaper and the "circuit-riding" – were mutually reinforcing.[16]

There were other important projects. He campaigned relentlessly against Christian missions to American Jews, and cultivated the goodwill of numerous Christian clergymen and local and national politicians. In 1857, the first edition of Minhag

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[15] Wise, Reminiscences, 330-32.

[16] Temkin Creating American Judaism, 112.

America – as Wise entitled his edition of the prayerbook – appeared. Mostly in Hebrew, with a lightly modified text, Minhag America quickly became the most widely used prayerbook in the United States. Some of Wise's ambitions were not immediately realized, including, in the 1850s, a plan for a union of congregations and for a seminary. But he triumphed twenty years later with the establishment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873 and the Hebrew Union College in 1875.[17]

An emphasis on the influence of gentility and respectability on American Jews' adoption of Reform overlooks the fact that Wise, as reform's cheerleader, was hardly genteel. Rather, he was naturally comfortable with the combative strain in nineteenth-century American society. In the pages of the Israelite, he spared no abuse of the opponents of reform, whom he characterized (in only one example) as agents of "the blindfolded ghost of superstition [and] the masked moloch of hypocrisy and bigotry." Temkin suggests that "his assertiveness enhanced his status in the eyes of the Jewish community" by demonstrating that he could play by America's rules. Wise himself was anything but genteel in many ways, but he used the rhetoric of respectability in appropriate forums, linking it to ideas of democracy and progress, and therefore making that progress available to his immigrant constituents.[18]

By the 1870s, through their own experience and the prodding of leaders like Wise, American Jewry had matured decisively. Its frontier days long since past. Cincinnati was now a capital of middle America and of Jewish America; middle-class

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[17] For specific analysis of the content of Minhag America, see Meyer, Response to Modernity, 254-55, and Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism, 149-56, 274-77.

[18] Israelite (March 23, 1860), quoted in Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism, 29. Temkin quote, 123.

respectability and a reformed Judaism co-existed happily. In fact, Ohio historian Henry Howe, writing in the 1870s, even pronounced it "a sort of paradise for the Hebrews." The elements of this post-Civil War vision of paradise included the convictions that Jews could succeed economically in America, that they could interact freely and equally with non-Jews, that working for "civic betterment" was their obligation as both citizens and Jews, and that they were the vanguard of a new American Judaism.[19]

From his Cincinnati base, Wise spread this vision to Jewish communities across the United States. Wise's personal presence was enormously important to his project of unity and reform. In addition to his writings, he traveled widely and frequently throughout the country, enlisting allies from both the rabbinate and the laity, promoting the formation of congregations, and exhorting Jews on their duties and potentials as Americans. He started his first journey back east on an Ohio River steamboat, stopping to visit Jewish communities at Louisville and Wheeling, in 1855. Jewish merchants from other towns also often visited his synagogue in Cincinnati. Linked by geographic proximity and ties of work and family to the Jewish culture of Cincinnati, Jews in the small Ohio River towns were the perfect audience for Wise's message.[20]

Portsmouth, Ohio, was precisely the sort of town in which the conditions existed for the development of the new concepts of American Judaism. The town offered both

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[19] Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience/HUC-JIR, 1989), 1 (quote from Howe), 4.

[20] Temkin, Creating Reform Judaism, 111, 126. A few members of Wise's board of trustees disapproved of this activity and attempted to curtail his travel schedule by proposing that the board (and not just the president) approve all of his absences from Cincinnati. The proposal failed by a large margin. This happened in November 1858, just a month before his visit to Portsmouth. Wise mentions out-of-town visiting merchants in Reminiscences, 258.

ample economic opportunities to Jewish merchants and social opportunities to Jewish citizens.

Portsmouth's prosperity was founded in Ohio River commerce, growing quickly after the advent of the first steamboat there in 1811. In 1829, the local newspaper listed no fewer than 911 steamboat arrivals for the year, almost three per day. The town was given a significant boost by the completion in 1832 of the Ohio and Erie Canal, which connected it with Lake Erie at Cleveland via Columbus. Drawing on regional agricultural resources, Portsmouth specialized in shipping out corn and pork products to the southern market. By the 1860s, railroad connections augmented the network of inexpensive transportation, boosting industrial growth in production of iron, clay and sandstone. In that decade, Portsmouth was the only town with a population over 10,000 in the entire mineral region of southern Ohio from Washington through Scioto counties.[21]

The group that organized Portsmouth's congregation in the fall of 1858 probably numbered about two dozen men, of all ages and marital statuses. All of them were merchants or clerks: most sold clothing and dry goods and several sold cigars or liquor. Their businesses were clustered in a six-square block area of town at the confluence of the Ohio and Scioto Rivers. Though some lived away from the business district by five or six blocks, many lived at or very near their places of employment. Those who were proprietors of their own establishments could probably be considered already middle-class; the others, especially the clerks, were still on the lower rungs of the middle class. A few months after organizing their congregation, the Jews of Portsmouth set up a

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[21] R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), 423; Knepper, Ohio and Its People, 157; Eugene H. Roseboom, The Civil War Era: 1850-1873, Vol. IV of A History of the State of Ohio (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 10.

synagogue on one floor of a downtown building owned by the Masons, not far from their businesses.

As he did with many new congregations, Isaac Mayer Wise attended the dedication. For the congregation, it was an opportunity to have an important figure – a rabbi from the big city – validate their presence and their project. They also no doubt realized that, as the religious anomaly in town, it behooved them to make their Judaism at least somewhat transparent to non-Jews, and dedication ceremonies were the perfect opportunity to open their doors and thereby perhaps dispel some of the mystery. For Wise, the event was an opportunity to present the values of the new American Judaism to Jews, with the goal of attaching them to his goals, **and** to Gentiles, with the goal of enhancing the reputation of Jews and Judaism.

On Friday evening, Wise spoke to the Jews. He urged the community to its mission: "to preserve and promulgate principles and doctrines of which the prophets tell us, that they are intended by Providence to redeem and unite humanity in light, truth, justice and freedom." On Sunday evening, he addressed a general audience on "the influence of the dispersed Israel on the progress of civilization." These small congregations, in the small towns of the American heartland, were for Wise the pioneers of his new American Judaism. Through integration into these typical American communities, they would recreate the image of the Jew: they would win acceptance from Gentiles as being demonstrably integral to the American scene, and cultivate pride in the Jewish contribution to America. Wise's assessment that in small towns, Jews were not "too much absorbed in business and pleasure pursuits," may have reflected a romantic and thoroughly American anti-urban mythology rather than a reality. But he was not

incorrect that, in their own fashion, small-town Jews were indeed "wide awake for their religion."[22]

Some Americanization had already taken place among the Jews of Portsmouth. In this respect, it was significant that their congregation rented space from the Masonic order, of which many of the Jewish men were members. In the mid-nineteenth century, fraternal orders were, like other American voluntary associations, "arenas of class-relevant social life." The Masons particularly were a bastion of bourgeois values, a place for immigrant men to refine their business contacts and their professional and social manners.[23]

This opportunity was available because at the time fraternal orders were "characterized by a striking degree of cultural pluralism." Masonry, especially, was not an alien culture for Jews: it was based on the Enlightenment principles of universalism and tolerance, and even used Jewish language and iconography in its rites and symbols. Sometimes Masonic ritual even melded with Jewish ritual, especially in the conduct of funerals, and many fledgling synagogues rented space in Masonic buildings. In small towns, membership in lodges such as the Masons was "close to universal."[24]

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[22] Israelite, 5:21 (November 26, 1858), 166, and 5:25 (December 24, 1858), 199.

[23] Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 192-229, quote on 192.

[24] Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), quote on p. 131; Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 160-62; Steven C. Bullock, Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Masonry, which originated in England, was in the colonial and early national eras an important part of elite American culture, and many leading colonial Jewish merchants were Masons. Seriously damaged by political opposition in the 1830s, the fraternity was revived in the 1840s and 1850s on more democratic lines, and it was this more middle-class organization which attracted up-and-coming German Jewish immigrant men. Masonry's theoretical tolerance of all theists had limits, of course; blacks were always excluded. Catholics were not entirely welcome, and in the late nineteenth century, the order began to exclude immigrant ethnics (Clawson, 131-32).

Because of the Masons' importance to the Portsmouth congregation, Wise took the opportunity of his visit to address the group. By praising Jews' involvement in American fraternalism, he could cultivate the bond of Jewish and American values so necessary to Jews' Americanization. Wise had once asserted that "Masonry is a Jewish institution whose history, degrees, charges, passwords and explanations are Jewish from the beginning to the end." In Portsmouth, he reiterated this notion, declaring that the "leading principles of Masonry are so much our own" – a fine note of encouragement to both Jews and Gentiles.[25]

It is also clear from reports of the Portsmouth event that the Jews there had absorbed American aesthetic preferences. Wise noted approvingly that the prayers for Friday evening and Saturday morning services were chanted "in a harmonious and simple-sublime manner." The old style of prayer was on the way out, but other traditions remained, particularly the separate seating for men and women. Though it is not possible to determine exactly when this practice was abandoned, there is evidence of the shift in values underlying the shift to "family seating." In an 1861 Israelite article, Portsmouth's Rev. Isaac Strouse praised the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society with words reeking of the values of gentility: "[t]he good ladies of this place . . . have done so much toward the prosperity of this Congregation. They have fitted up the synagogue in a very nice and becoming manner: they are always first in attendance at the synagogue; in short they are always foremost in every noble and generous undertaking . . . . [S]hould I sometimes get

[25] First passage quoted in Diner, Time for Gathering, 162; second quote from Israelite 5:25 (December 24, 1858), 199.

weary or tired, if I should meet with no support, I shall think of the good ladies of Portsmouth, and I know – all will be right."[26]

In the next few years, this slow process of change in Portsmouth continued. Another set of steps towards reform was taken during the tenure of Judah Wechsler as rabbi. The congregation's first Jewish professional was Rev. Abraham Lasker, who was replaced in 1860 by Strouse, who had served the previous year in the upriver city of Wheeling. Neither of these men was ordained, but evidently by 1861, the Portsmouth congregation was prosperous enough to hire a trained rabbi with some experience in America. The Bavarian-born Wechsler had both a traditional yeshiva education and secular university training, and was a moderate reformer of the Wise variety. By the High Holidays in the fall of 1861, there were, in Wechsler's words to the Israelite, "many improvements in the synagogue. Many prayers are abolished, the Haftorah is read either in English or German, the Thorah is read by me in a plain, and not in singing manner, and not the least of all, there is a choir established . . . . I shall very shortly recommend other reforms to the Congregation, and have the utmost confidence, that they all will be adopted."[27]

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[26] Quote from Wise: Israelite, 5:25 (December 24, 1858), 199. Quote from Strouse: Stanley R. Brav, "The Jewish Woman, 1861-1865," American Jewish Archives 27 (April 1965), 47. Strouse's comments originally appeared in the Israelite (September 27, 1861), 98.

[27] Re Lasker and Strouse: Israelite, 7:14 (October 5, 1860), 106. Functionaries such as Lasker and Strouse were commonly referred to as "reverends" or "ministers," on the one hand to distinguish them from rabbis and on the other hand to make their role transparent to the communities' Protestant neighbors. The Protestant terminology certainly sounded more "respectable" than the Hebrew *shamash*, which can be translated as the rather old-fashioned "beadle," but is also "attendant," "servant," or even "janitor." In German, the position was often designated "Lehrer und Prediger" (Teacher and Preacher).

Re Wechsler: Judith Endelman, The Jewish Community of Indianapolis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 17-18. Wechsler was living in the river town of Bellaire, Ohio, at the time of his 1855 marriage with Jeannette Rosenbach of Cumberland, Maryland, where (at some point) Wechsler served as rabbi. Coincidentally, the wedding was performed by Isaac Strouse, who then lived in Wheeling (Deborah 1:15 [November 30, 1855], 120). Strouse eventually retired to Pittsburgh (Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 38). In addition to Cumberland, Wechsler also served (for one year,

Indeed, within a month, Wechsler reported to the Israelite that he had convinced the congregation almost unanimously to adopt Minhag America and to shorten the weekly Torah reading to a triennial cycle. The net result, he announced proudly, was that the service was very much like that of Wise's congregation. This burst of enthusiasm was apparently a bit premature. The next spring, in May 1862, in another letter to the Israelite praising the progress of reform in Portsmouth, Wechsler admitted that though Minhag America had been approved, it was being introduced only gradually.[28]

Wechsler also spent time with the Jews in nearby Gallipolis, who maintained a connection with the larger Portsmouth community. In 1864, he performed the wedding of Jacob Emsheimer and Fanny Weikersheimer and, as he reported in the Israelite, "in a very short time afterwards another union was accomplished in the formation of a congregation." Henry Frank was appointed temporary president and Michael Emsheimer temporary secretary; Leopold Frank offered his "elegant hall" as a temporary synagogue.[29]

Wechsler was very pleased with the proceedings and with the Jews of Gallipolis. The city, he noted, "was formerly a place of no significance, but since the last three years in consequence of its situation became a place of considerable importance . . . . Our

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just before Max Del Banco) in Evansville, Indiana, then moved to the small Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation in 1858. IHC had already begun tentative moves to reform, and Wechsler steered the congregation to continue in that direction. Portsmouth was able to hire him when IHC could not afford to continue their commitment.

Like Wechsler and Strouse, other reverends/rabbis appeared in several towns in the Ohio River Valley. B.F. Fuld worked in both Evansville and Wheeling, and Leon Leopold in Evansville and Paducah. Re Minhag America in Portsmouth: Israelite, 8:13 (September 27, 1861), 98.

[28] Israelite, 8:16 (October 18, 1861), 125, and 8:41 (May 2, 1862), 350.

[29] Israelite, 11:13 (September 23, 1864), 101. Jews in Gallipolis had contributed to the renovation of the Portsmouth synagogue that year ( Israelite, 10:35 [February 26, 1864], 277).

brethren are also doing well, and although but 12 families are residing there, I predict for Judaism a glorious future in this city, because the proper spirit is manifested." Wechsler was generally optimistic about the future of Judaism in the small towns of America. "I have never [had] more pleasing experience than here," he effused. "I satisfied myself more than ever, that Judaism exercises too profoundly an influence upon every Israelite as to remain long indifferent." Again, Wechsler may have spoken prematurely, but in 1869, the Israelite reported that "our friend Emsheimer" confirmed the successful establishment of the congregation, "Minhag America of course."[30]

The late 1860s and 1870s saw much movement towards reform in American Judaism, and the position of a reformed Judaism was gaining an accepted place in the religious landscapes of the small towns. In 1868, the congregation in Madison, Indiana, moved into its own building, a vacant high school purchased from the city. The Israelite reported that the local Christians – in an apparent fit of boosterism – had "prompted" the Jews to make this move in order that all religious denominations should be appropriately represented in Madison. Indeed, Protestants and Catholics alike "liberally subscribed" to the building fund. Wise's colleague Rabbi Max Lilienthal (who had visited Madison occasionally in the early 1850s) came from Cincinnati for the dedication. In 1869 the

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30 Israelite, 11:13 (September 23, 1864), 101, and 15:35 (March 5, 1869), 2. When he first came to Portsmouth, Wechsler had grandly announced that "notwithstanding all obstacles which would come in my way, I would advocate every measure which I consider just and right . . . . [and] promised that I would ever be guided by the words: 'Let there be light.'" (Israelite 8:13 [September 27, 1861], 98.) But he was disappointed with the pace of change, unhappy with the small size of the congregation, and itching to return to Indianapolis – which he did in 1864 (Israelite 10:22 [November 27, 1863], 173 and 8:29 [January 17, 1862], 230).

congregation formally adopted Minhag America and in 1873, they installed an organ in the synagogue.[31]

Likewise, in September 1871, the Jewish community in Paducah, Kentucky, held a public dedication for a small synagogue. As one Paducah Jew, later prominent in Louisville, noted in his memoirs, "A Synagogue was a novelty and attracted a large number of people who up to that time had never seen such a house of worship and had but a faint idea of Judaism, its principles and ideals." Within a few years, the congregation had abandoned the orthodoxy that many (including the memoirist) felt separated them from the "progressive" thrust of American ideals.[32]

In Evansville, where Max Del Banco had skirmished with "Judah" over reform in 1860, both reform and respectability seemed to be triumphing by the end of that decade. In 1864, Congregation B'nai Israel laid the cornerstone for a permanent synagogue building at Sixth and Division Streets; in 1865, the temple, in so-called "Moorish-Saracenic" style, was completed and dedicated, with Isaac Mayer Wise in attendance. The building was a grand statement of the Jewish community's aspirations: reportedly it cost $45,000 to build and could seat 600, even though a decade later the community still numbered far fewer than that. One can speculate that their model was the elaborate Moorish-style building then being erected by Wise's Cincinnati congregation. That project, which began in 1863, was completed in 1866 at a cost of over $250,000. The

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[31] Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Visitor's Tour, Madison, Indiana's Jewish Community, 1849-1923," Indiana Jewish History 23 (April 1988). Re Lilienthal's visit: Israelite 15:11 (September 18, 1868), 5 (for Lilienthal's previous experiences in Madison, see Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio – A History of Madison Indiana's Jews," Indiana Jewish History 27 [July 1991], 40). Re Minhag America and organ: Weinberg, "Adas Israel's First Teacher – Bernhard Felsenthal," Indiana Jewish History 24 (October 1988), 32.

[32] Isaac W. Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah: Temple Israel, 1912), 65.

cost of Evansville's project, however, was greater than the numbers alone would indicate. The controversy over reform seems to have split the community, for Orthodox congregation B'nai Moshe made its appearance by 1870.[33]

Other communities with fewer numbers would tread cautiously along the path of reform, but the path was still clear. In 1873, after some years of makeshift High Holiday services in various locations in town, seventeen men from among the twenty or so families in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, organized K.K. Ansche Israel and bought an abandoned schoolhouse to use as a synagogue. Writing to the Israelite, a local admitted frankly of "want of unity and cooperation among the members." Trying to include people of "widely divergent" Jewish backgrounds and preferences into a cohesive small group was hindering development. Those offended by certain decisions were threatening to quit, which would endanger the very existence of the congregation. "Thus we are prevented

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[33] Re Evansville synagogue: "100th Anniversary – Washington Avenue Temple, 1857-1957," Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana (AJA), 1; History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana (Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889), 304. The Jewish population of Evansville in 1878 was about 375 (Jacob Rader Marcus, To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984 [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990], 65). The same year they completed the synagogue, the Evansville congregation established its own day school, at which the congregation's "reverend," Simon Hecht, taught religion, Bible, Hebrew, and German ("100th Anniversary – Washington Avenue Temple, 1857-1957," 2). In the years before adequate (and adequately secular) public schools, many communities supported such schools (Silverstein, Alan, Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840-1930 [Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1994], 31-33).

Re synagogue architecture: Meyer, Response to Modernity, 250-251. For a fascinating look at the reasons for the popularity of the Moorish style in nineteenth-century synagogue architecture, see Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 34: 1989, 47-66.

One local history gives the date of B'nai Moshe's founding as 1870 (History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana [1889], 304) while another gives it as 1868 (Joseph P. Elliott, A History of Evansville and Vanderburgh County, Indiana [Evansville: Keller Printing, 1897], 275). Without detailed records, it is impossible to judge the extent and exact nature of the religious differences between the two groups, but a parallel might be drawn to a similar situation that arose at almost the same time in Baltimore. In 1871, traditionalists withdrew from one congregation when the membership approved certain reforms, and established their own German Orthodox congregation that Americanized its service in terms of decorum and aesthetics without changing the traditional content or style. German Orthodox congregations, far fewer than Reform congregations, were still socio-economically similar. See Marsha Rozenblit, "Choosing a Synagogue: The Social Composition of Two German Congregations in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore," in Wertheimer, American Synagogue, 327-62.

from acting with much independence," he noted, "but must attempt to please everybody." By the early 1880's, the congregation was using the former Christian Church building as a synagogue, and by the early twentieth century, the congregation was unambiguously Reform.[34]

Judaism was indeed becoming respectable – as in the rest of America, so too in the Ohio River Valley. One community was somewhat suspect, however, for neither lay initiative nor rabbinic prodding created a congregation. In comparison with Jews in other river towns, Jews in Parkersburg, West Virginia, were notably unenergetic about organized religion. In April 1875, Isaac Mayer Wise came to town to perform the wedding of Charles and Rowena Rauch's daughter, Lilly, to Morris Cohn. He reported in the American Israelite that Parkersburg was "a nice, clean, busy little city" with about fifteen Jewish families, one of whom, the Pragers, owned the most prominent dry goods store in town. "All of Parkersburg" was at the wedding – which was actually a double wedding, since Wise also oversaw the conversion to Judaism of the bride's mother and the re-marriage by Jewish tradition of the bride's parents.[35]

Wise found this Jewish community sadly lacking in certain aspects of respectability. The women knew how to conduct themselves as proper Americans; "[t]he

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[34] Israelite, 22:1 (January 2, 1874), 6; W.P. Leonard, History and Directory of Posey County (Evansville: A.C. Isaacs, 1882 [1974 reprint]), 65; Constitution of K.K. Ansche Israel, with amendments, undated, but probably around 1912 (Microfilm #816, AJA).

[35] Re Rauch/Cohn marriage: Wes Cochran, Wood County, W.V., Marriages 1880-1925, (n.p., n.d.), 245. The bride was eighteen years old and American-born; the groom was twenty-nine and an immigrant from Hungary. American Israelite, 24:17 (April 23, 1875), 6. Wise changed the name of the paper from the Israelite to the American Israelite in July 1874, in a fit of optimism that "Americanized Judaism [was] now prevailing over the length and breadth of this country" (Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism, 266). There is no reference to the bride being converted, which of course would have been necessary according to *halakhah*. The prevalence of such incidents in nineteenth-century America suggests widespread de facto recognition of patrilineality long before it was validated de jure.

ladies of Parkersburg [who had organized a benevolent society] are all," he said, "very affable and kind." But he commented contemptuously, "[t]he gentlemen are all sinners and publicans, for they can not afford to support a Hebrew congregation." Wise's choice of insults cannot have been arbitrary; he probably used the New Testament cadence (one thinks of "Pharisees and hypocrites") to emphasize how refusing to participate in public religious life could delegitimize Jews in Christian eyes. Not that Wise was any admirer of Christianity. But properly Americanized Jews would not be sinful and materialistic; they would be virtuous and generous, and their institutions would announce this to the ambient society.[36]

As Jews became Americans on the personal level and in their local institutions, so too did broad trends in American life affect national Jewish activity. The organization of like-minded local churches into national denominations had provided antebellum Protestantism with a portable religious identity, support in outreach to the unchurched, educational resources, and a reliable ministry. "By 1840," Alan Silverstein asserts, "to be a bona fide American religious movement meant to be organized as a national religious union."[37]

In 1873, a union of American Jewish congregations – long a goal of Wise, Leeser, and other rabbis – was finally born, with its center of gravity in the Ohio River

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[36] American Israelite 24:17 (April 23, 1875), 6. (Wise actually disdained Christianity considerably, viz., e.g., in Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism, 160-61.) I am at a loss to explain why Parkersburg, among all the Ohio River towns, even those in the South, was such an aberration.

[37] Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation, 36. For the importance of denominations to American identity, see Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, Religion in America (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 142.

Valley. Ironically, the project of creating a union succeeded precisely when Wise was able to let go and leave it to lay initiative. Several national rabbinical conferences, held between 1855 and 1871, had produced only ideological dissension. The "bottom-up" approach succeeded because the laity could more easily set aside ideological disagreements in order to work on practical matters. The organizing conference created a structure of denominational supports to, in its words, "establish, sustain and govern a seat of learning for Jewish religion and literature; to provide for and advance the standards of Sabbath Schools; and to aid and encourage young congregations." The new Jewish denomination, calling itself the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was not by any means intended to promote reform, which seemed to be – at least in its moderate version – where most congregations were moving in any event.[38]

Leadership of the union was taken by the large Cincinnati congregations, but the small communities of the Midwest were the UAHC's backbone. Close to three-quarters of all Midwestern congregations in existence in 1877 were members of the Union at some point in the nineteenth century, as were two-thirds of all those in the South – and only one-fourth of those in the Northeast. In addition to five congregations from Cincinnati and both from Louisville, several Ohio River towns also sent delegates to the 1873 organizing convention, including Evansville (both B'nai Israel and B'ne Moshe, with 82 and 27 members respectively), Portsmouth (reporting 21 members), and Madison (reporting 22). Owensboro, Kentucky's congregation joined in 1874.[39]

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[38] Conference material quoted in Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation, 49. For the rabbinical conferences, see Meyer, Response to Modernity, 243-60. Wise may not have organized the Union, but he campaigned vociferously for it (Temkin, Creating American Reform Judaism, 258-66).

[39] Re UAHC membership: Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation, 49. Only one-fourth of northeastern congregations were in the UAHC even after its merger with the Board of Delegates of American Israelites.

The connections fostered by Wise over the years paid off in the response to the UAHC. Wise and his colleague Rabbi Max Lilienthal had aided Beneh Abraham's fundraising by giving several lectures at the Portsmouth Opera House in March 1870. When the call for the union organizing convention went out, the congregation responded with alacrity. Mayer Eichelstein and Leopold Wise volunteered to attend at their own expense, and when Portsmouth finalized its membership in the UAHC, it was by unanimous approval of the congregational board.[40]

Representatives of the small communities took active roles in building the union. Samuel Meyer of Evansville served on the first Executive Board. The bulk of the initial funding ($10,000) for the new rabbinical school, to be called the Hebrew Union College, was provided by Henry Adler of the small Ohio River town of Lawrenceburg, Indiana. (Adler was a friend of Wise, who, of course, became first president of the college.) Additional contributions came in from Lawrenceburg, and from Paducah, Pomeroy, and Portsmouth; Samuel Newberger of Parkersburg also volunteered to solicit funds. Joining the UAHC gave congregations in small towns a link to the larger Jewish world, important both for their own development and for presenting their religion to non-Jews.[41]

Some modern writers have judged America's nineteenth-century German Jews very harshly, denigrating their concern for respectability as craven assimilationism.

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a regional association of congregations in the Northeast. Re organizing convention: Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: Volume I, 1873-1879 (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co. Printers, 1879), 8, 15, 30.

[40] Congregation Beneh Abraham – Minute Book 1863-1896 (Box X-54, AJA), entries for April 3, 1870; June 8, 1873; June 19, 1874.

[41] Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: Volume I, 20, 66, 81, 137.

Arthur Hertzberg declared that the German Jewish immigrants, who were "willing to travel as light as possible" on the road to economic success "by abandoning much or even all of their religious and cultural distinctiveness," were primarily interested in "refurbishing their synagogues so that they would be acceptable to the Gentile majority." Essentially, their only principles were money and Gentile approval. Henry Feingold claimed that the nineteenth-century reformers "had thrown out the baby with the bath water . . . . [casting] out much that made Judaism distinctive," and that "[i]n **many** cases [emphasis mine] the acceptance of Reform became merely a *rite de passage* for transferring one's loyalty to one of the less Christologized Protestant sects, such as Unitarianism."[42]

Hasia Diner admits to having come to her work on America's German Jews with a similar negative attitude: that they were "stiff and formal, afraid to assert their ethnic identity, and their primary goal, apart from achieving economic wealth, was to be accepted and to blend into America." Her researches made her far more sympathetic to the immigrants' balancing act of respectability and acculturation versus tradition. She argues that despite substantial changes to practice, the sheer number and variety of Jewish institutions, in all parts of the United States, in small towns as well as cities, proves that "American Jews demonstrated a deep wish to live as Jews" and that, in a climate of religious pluralism, "Jews suffered little for their distinctiveness," which they actively celebrated. After all, American Jews "could celebrate holidays when no one else did, they could emblazon their buildings with Hebrew letters and Jewish symbols, and

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[42] Arthur Hertzberg, The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 112, 117; Feingold, Zion in America (New York: Hippocrene, 1974), 112. As far as Hertzberg's biases, his subtitle says it all. Pace Feingold, there is no evidence whatsoever that German Jews took up Christianity – even in its Unitarian form – in large numbers.

they could boldly state [particularly in debates on religion in the public sphere] that the Christianity of the majority was not theirs."[43]

This "deep wish to live as Jews" was quite evident in the small towns of the Ohio River Valley in the post-Civil War era. Jews continued to move to the small towns from the cities and from town to town along the river, starting new businesses. They continued to develop institutional life. In 1874, a nucleus of related families in Ironton, Ohio, who had formerly belonged to B'nai Abraham in Portsmouth, organized their own congregation. In the 1880s, the hundred or so Jews in Henderson, Kentucky, organized a congregation, a women's auxiliary, a cemetery and a school. Even the tiny group in Gallipolis employed a "teacher and preacher."[44]

In the optimistic 1870s, Leon Jick concludes, "American Jewry believed it had found the synthesis through which it would participate in the inauguration of the messianic age which seemed to be at hand." Eventually the rhetoric of respectability modulated into the rhetoric of ideology. Jews could attach a systematic Reform ideology

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[43] Diner, Time for Gathering, 141. Diner admits that her bias stems from being the child of Eastern European immigrants, and she was surprised how similar the German and East European experiences actually were. This bias is widely held among East Europeans' descendants, who are convinced that their expressive Jewish style is inherently more "authentically Jewish" and that somehow attention to manners and behaviors violates basic Jewish ethics. One might call it presentism, except that it really represents a nostalgia for the immigrant past before their **own** group's acculturation. Naomi Cohen opines that German Jews were "desperately seeking security" and so "walked an emotional tightrope": they had "a virtual obsession about being constantly judged." She claims this self-consciousness came from a need – and desire – to counteract antisemitism, even more than from "class interest." In this glass-half-empty view, the German Jews were not wrong to obsess about American antisemitism. This seems at odds with her emphasis on German Jews' faith in the American idea and with her numerous examples of Jewish resistance to Christian pressure (Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914 [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984], xii, 50, 109, 112).

[44] Re Ironton: Congregation Oheb Shalom – Articles of Incorporation, from Lawrence County, Ohio, Corp. Book 1, 1874 (Histories File, AJA). There were four founding officers, all clothing merchants born in South German lands, and three of these men were married to women who were born in Maryland. Probably the men had entered the U.S. at Baltimore and had stayed long enough to become part of the community and marry local women. Re Henderson: S. O. Heilbronner, "History of the Jews and the Congregation Adas Israel," ms., 1942, unpaginated, (SC 4902, AJA). Re Gallipolis: American Israelite 33:11 (September 12, 1879), 3.

to their middle class values because both validated many of the same concepts: individualism, voluntarism, and mission. Mixed seating was increasingly identified with women's emancipation, and separation seen as necessarily discrimination. Order and decorum became supporting evidence for the essential rationality of Judaism. American Jews had developed their synthesis before developing a systematic explication thereof; pragmatic reforms served ideology as much as vice versa. A fully articulated institutional ideology would emerge in the Reform movement in the 1880s.[45]

In 1883, Hebrew Union College celebrated the ordination of its first class of rabbis. It was, Michael Meyer suggests, "the high point of Jewish religious unity in America." Very soon the experiment in practical union would collapse in the face of intractable ideological difference, exposing true union as a chimera, while leaving the UAHC free to become standard-bearer for the radical reform of Judaism. But these issues were not of the greatest consequence to the small Jewish communities of the Ohio River Valley. The main concern was to keep their institutions solvent and effective, to secure a pattern of small-town Judaism that could hold them until the next century.[46]

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[45] Goldman, Beyond the Synagogue Gallery, 81, 129-30; Jick, Americanization of the Synagogue, 191-93. Also, Jonathan Sarna, "A Great Awakening" (New York: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1995), 7.

[46] Quote from Meyer, Response to Modernity, 263.

COUNTY AND TOWN POPULATIONS 1840-1900

| | | 1840 | | 1850 | | 1860 | | 1870 | | 1880 | | 1890 | | 1900 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PENNSYLVANIA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Allegheny | | 81,235 | | 138,290 | | 178,822 | | 262,204 | | 355,869 | | 551,959 | | 775,058 |
| (Pittsburgh) | (1) | 31,204 | | 46,601 | | 49,217 | | 86,076 | | 156,389 | | 238,617 | | 321,616 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| OHIO | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Columbiana | | 40,378 | | 33,621 | | 32,836 | | 38,299 | | 48,602 | | 59,029 | | 68,590 |
| (E. Liverpool) | | 503 | (2) | 1,581 | | 2,051 | | 2,105 | | 5,568 | | 10,956 | | 16,485 |
| Jefferson | | 25,030 | | 29,133 | | 26,115 | | 29,188 | | 33,018 | | 39,415 | | 44,357 |
| (Steubenville) | | 5,203 | | 6,140 | | 6,154 | | 8,107 | | 12,093 | | 13,394 | | 14,349 |
| Belmont | | 30,901 | | 34,600 | | 36,398 | | 39,714 | | 49,683 | | 57,413 | | 60,875 |
| (Bellaire) | | nl | | nl | | 1,466 | | 4,033 | | 8,025 | | 9,934 | | 9,912 |
| Washington | | 20,823 | | 29,540 | | 36,268 | | 40,609 | | 43,244 | | 42,380 | | 48,245 |
| (Marietta) | (3) | 2,506 | | 4,185 | | 5,529 | | 6,729 | | 7,016 | | 8,273 | | 13,348 |
| Meigs | | 11,452 | | 17,971 | | 26,534 | | 31,465 | | 32,325 | | 29,813 | | 28,620 |
| (Pomeroy) | | nl | | 1,638 | | 6,480 | | 5,824 | | 5,560 | | 4,726 | | 4,639 |
| Gallia | | 13,444 | | 17,063 | | 22,043 | | 25,545 | | 28,124 | | 27,005 | | 27,918 |
| (Gallipolis) | | 1,413 | | 1,686 | | 3,418 | | 3,711 | | 4,400 | | 4,498 | | 5,432 |
| Lawrence | | 9,738 | | 15,246 | | 23,219 | | 31,380 | | 39,068 | | 39,556 | | 39,534 |
| (Ironton) | | nl | | nl | | 3,691 | | 5,686 | | 8,857 | | 10,939 | | 11,868 |
| Scioto | | 11,192 | | 18,428 | | 24,297 | | 29,302 | | 33,511 | | 35,377 | | 40,981 |
| (Portsmouth) | | nl | (4) | 4,011 | | 6,268 | | 10,592 | | 11,321 | | 12,394 | | 17,870 |
| Hamilton | | 80,145 | | 156,844 | | 216,401 | | 260,370 | | 313,374 | | 374,573 | | 409,479 |
| (Cincinnati) | | 46,338 | | 115,435 | | 161,044 | | 216,239 | | 255,139 | | 296,908 | | 325,902 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

COUNTY AND TOWN POPULATIONS 1840-1900

| | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INDIANA | | | | | | | | |
| Dearborn | 19,327 | 20,166 | 24,397 | 24,116 | | 26,671 | 23,364 | 22,194 |
| (Lawrenceburg) | nl | 2,651 | 3,599 | 3,159 | | 4,668 | 4,284 | 4,362 |
| Jefferson | 16,614 | 23,916 | 25,027 | 29,741 | | 25,977 | 24,507 | 22,913 |
| (Madison) | 3,798 | 8,012 | 8,130 | 10,709 | | 8,945 | 8,936 | 7,835 |
| Floyd | 9,454 | 14,875 | 20,174 | 23,300 | | 24,590 | 29,458 | 30,118 |
| (New Albany) | 4,226 | 9,859 | 12,647 | 15,396 | | 16,423 | 21,059 | 20,628 |
| Vanderburgh | 6,250 | 11,414 | 20,543 | 33,145 | | 42,193 | 59,809 | 71,769 |
| (Evansville) | nl | 3,235 | 11,484 | 21,830 | | 29,280 | 50,756 | 59,007 |
| Posey | 9,683 | 12,549 | 16,158 | 19,185 | | 20,857 | 21,529 | 22,333 |
| (Mt. Vernon) | nl | 1,120 | 1,994 | 2,880 | | 3,730 | 4,705 | 5,132 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| ILLINOIS | | | | | | | | |
| Alexander | 3,313 | 2,484 | 4,698 | 10,564 | | 14,808 | 16,563 | 19,384 |
| (Cairo) | nl | 242 | 2,188 | 6,267 | | 9,011 | 10,324 | 12,566 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| [W.] VIRGINIA | | | | | | | | |
| Ohio | 13,357 | 18,006 | 22,422 | 28,831 | | 37,457 | 41,557 | 48,024 |
| (Wheeling) | 7,885 | 11,435 | 14,083 | 19,280 | | 30,737 | 34,522 | 38,878 |
| Wood | 7,923 | 9,450 | 11,046 | 19,000 | | 25,006 | 28,612 | 34,452 |
| (Parkersburg) | nl | 1,218 | 2,493 | 5,546 | | 6,582 | 8,408 | 11,703 |
| Cabell | 8,163 | 6,299 | 8,020 | 6,429 | | 13,744 | 23,595 | 29,252 |
| (Huntington) | nl | nl | nl | nl | (5) | 3,174 | 10,108 | 11,923 |

COUNTY AND TOWN POPULATIONS 1840-1900

| | | 1840 | | 1850 | | 1860 | | 1870 | | 1880 | | 1890 | | 1900 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KENTUCKY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Boyd | | nl | | nl | (6) | 6,044 | | 8,573 | | 12,165 | | 14,033 | | 18,834 |
| (Ashland) | | nl | | nl | | nl | | 2,462 | | 3,280 | | 4,195 | | 6,800 |
| Mason | | 15,719 | | 18,344 | | 18,222 | | 18,126 | | 20,469 | | 20,773 | | 20,446 |
| (Maysville) | | 2,741 | | 4,256 | | 4,106 | | 4,705 | | 5,220 | | 5,358 | | 6,423 |
| Kenton | | 7,816 | | 17,038 | | 25,467 | | 36,096 | | 43,983 | | 54,161 | | 63,591 |
| (Covington) | | 2,026 | | 9,408 | | 16,471 | | 24,505 | | 29,720 | | 37,371 | | 42,938 |
| Campbell | | 5,214 | | 13,127 | | 20,909 | | 27,406 | | 37,440 | | 44,208 | | 54,223 |
| (Newport) | | nl | (7) | 5,895 | | 10,046 | | 15,087 | | 20,433 | | 24,918 | | 28,301 |
| Jefferson | | 36,346 | | 59,831 | | 89,404 | | 118,953 | | 146,010 | | 188,598 | | 232,549 |
| (Louisville) | | 21,210 | | 43,194 | | 68,033 | | 100,753 | | 123,758 | | 161,129 | | 204,731 |
| Daviess | | 8,331 | | 12,362 | | 15,549 | | 20,714 | | 27,730 | | 33,120 | | 38,667 |
| (Owensboro) | | nl | (8) | 1,215 | | 2,308 | | 3,437 | | 6,231 | | 9,837 | | 13,189 |
| Henderson | | 9,548 | | 12,171 | | 14,262 | | 18,457 | | 24,515 | | 29,536 | | 32,907 |
| (Henderson) | | nl | | 1,775 | | nl | | 4,171 | | 5,365 | | 8,835 | | 10,272 |
| McCracken | | 4,745 | | 6,067 | | 10,360 | | 13,998 | | 16,262 | | 21,051 | | 28,733 |
| (Paducah) | | nl | (9) | 2,428 | | 4,590 | | 6,866 | | 8,036 | | 12,797 | | 19,446 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

NOTES FOR TABLE: COUNTY AND TOWN POPULATIONS 1840-1900

nl = not listed

(1) Pittsburgh figures include Allegheny City, which was annexed in 1907.

(2) "Liverpool" (former name)

(3) Marietta figures include Harmar village, which was annexed in 1890. The breakdown of the totals is:

| | Marietta | Harmar |
|---|---|---|
| 1840 | 1,814 | 692 |
| 1850 | 3,175 | 1,010 |
| 1860 | 4,323 | 1,206 |
| 1870 | 5,218 | 1,511 |
| 1880 | 5,444 | 1,572 |

(4) Portsmouth not listed separately (1830 population was 1,064)

(5) Huntington founded 1871

(6) Boyd County created 1860

(7) Newport not listed separately (1830 population was 715)

(8) Owensboro not listed separately (1830 population was 229)

(9) Paducah not listed separately (1830 population was 105)

all county data from: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census

town data from printed census volumes

## PROLOGUE : THE SALIENCY OF REGION

On December 17, 1862, the following order came across the desk of Captain L.J. Wardell, Provost Marshal of the Union Army forces in Paducah, Kentucky. It was wired from the Holly Springs, Mississippi, headquarters of the Union's Department of the Tennessee, which was under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant.

> The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also [military] department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.
>
> Post Commanders will see that all of this class of people are furnished passes and required to leave, and any one returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permit from these headquarters.
>
> No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade permits.

It was signed by Assistant Adjutant General Jonathan A. Rawlins "by order" of Major General U.S. Grant. [1]

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[1] Text of order as quoted in Bertram W. Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 122-23. A slightly different version appears in Stephen V. Ash, "Civil War Exodus: The Jews and

Outside of the immediate area of Holly Springs, this order – General Order No. 11, which Bertram Korn calls "the most sweeping anti-Jewish regulation in all American history" – was almost completely disregarded. The exception was the town of Paducah, with a Jewish population of about thirty families. Following orders, Captain Wardell hurried all Paducah Jews, with the exception of two sick old women, onto a boat heading upriver to Cincinnati.[2]

This incident had its roots in a larger issue in the war's western theatre. The outbreak of hostilities had restricted the export of southern cotton, but had not lessened the demand in the northern states and in Europe. To meet this demand, the U.S. Treasury Department decided to permit a limited cotton trade within those areas of the Confederacy under Union control. The Mississippi River, part of Grant's area of command, was the main avenue of shipment. Not surprisingly, this lucrative trade could not be effectively controlled by the license requirements and other regulations that the Treasury attempted to impose. Cotton trading quickly became the province of speculators and was rife with corruption. Administering regulations was the army's responsibility, and it infuriated Grant and his staff to be distracted from military activities to administer this game of greed and private enrichment.[3]

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Grant's General Orders No. 11." Historian 44:4 (August 1982), 510-11. Korn's source is The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. I, v. 17, pt. 2: 424. Ash's source is the edited and printed edition of Grant's papers.

[2] Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 122. Korn tells the Paducah story in great detail (121-55). Ash, however, does a better job analyzing the local angle. Korn's book, first published in 1951, tends to reflect an older American Jewish defensive agenda, so he spends much time demonstrating that Jews were not inordinately involved in illegal commerce (and therefore did not "cause" antisemitism). He is also very interested in the Gentile response to Jewish protest.

[3] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 505-8; Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 121-22. The worry about the effect of businesses profiting during wartime was widespread (see, e.g., Randall C. Jimerson, The

As tensions rose, accusations of unscrupulous dealings by Jewish traders surfaced and spread in newspaper articles and private correspondence and conversation. "The terms Jew and trader were in fact often used synonymously [in v]irtually every diatribe delivered against the speculators by army officers or others in the Mississippi Valley in 1862," historian Stephen Ash discovered. "Sherman habitually denounced 'Jews and speculators' in the same breath and Grant ordered officers dealing with traders to take special precautions with the 'Isrealites' [sic]."[4]

Grant would have preferred to stop the cotton trade in his department entirely, but that was clearly not acceptable to the Treasury. Frustrated (and also, perhaps, embarrassed by his father's involvement in a legitimate cotton trading partnership with some Jewish merchants in Cincinnati), Grant lit on one group he thought he might be able to control, and his scapegoating of Jews generally legitimated the scapegoating of the Jews in Paducah specifically, because that city was experiencing "peculiarly intensified" economic and social dislocation.[5]

As a border state, Kentucky was critical to the Union, and control of Paducah, only fifty miles up the Ohio from the Mississippi, was vital to Union strength in the region. But the residents of Paducah were deeply divided in their loyalties. Before the war, Paducah was an important point for trade between South and North. Southern markets were now cut off. In order to parcel out the remaining commercial power and

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Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988], 210-19).

[4] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 508.

[5] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 512-14.

keep tabs on possible furtive southern connections, the Treasury department put control of Paducah's commercial life in the hands of a hand-picked pro-Union board of trade. This board issued the permits necessary to do business in town. Trouble was inevitable, and soon army officers, government officials, and local merchants were all accusing each other of corruption. In the "epidemic of suspicion and recrimination," gripping Paducah, local Jews – mostly established residents and none involved in the cotton trade – were singled out in the minds of many Gentile citizens the way they had been in the mind of Ulysses Grant. No Jews were on the board of trade and none were issued business permits by the board; bereft of political protection, their expulsion was a satisfying diversion.[6]

In Ash's opinion, the expulsion order was "a logical culmination of the history of anti-Semitism in Grant's army and his own intensifying bigotry, a culmination shaped by the penchant of the soldier for quick and decisive remedies based on military considerations alone." Grant later admitted to having acted hastily and thoughtlessly: "'During war times these nice distinctions [of rights] were disregarded . . . . We had had no time to handle things with kid gloves.'"[7]

The Jewish reaction to the expulsion has gone down in the annals of American Jewish history as proof of America's exceptionalism in the face of what would have been

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[6] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 514-16. Isaac Wolfe Bernheim's memoir mentions the "period of unrest and insecurity" (History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley [Paducah: Temple Israel, 1912], 33) but not the expulsion. Perhaps, as a lifelong Republican, he was embarrassed by Grant's actions. One long-term Paducah family claims a grandfather avoided explusion, thereby qualifying the family as the longest continuous Jewish residents of the city. The story is family lore and cannot be verified (Miriam Heller Michael, SC-4554, AJA).

[7] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 511, 518-22. In the long-term, evaluations of the incident and assessments of blame reflected general pro- or anti-Lincoln sentiment generally, rather than attitudes about Jewish issues or civil rights. When Grant ran for president in 1868, Democrats publicized the incident more to embarrass Grant than to defend principle.

in Europe unexceptional antisemitism. Jews not only felt free to protest to the government, but expected – and demanded – that their grievances be remedied. Paducah Jewish leaders, including the Kaskel and Wolff brothers, immediately sent telegrams of protest directly to President Lincoln and appealed to other Jewish communities in the region for help. Within a few days, "Jews all along the Ohio River [especially the large Jewish communities of Cincinnati and Louisville] had been stirred to action." (A few local non-Jews raised some protest, but not enough, Ash notes, even to warrant a mention in Paducah city council meetings.) In January 1863, Cesar Kaskel, accompanied by Congressman John A. Gurley of Cincinnati, met with Lincoln, who ordered General-in-Chief Henry Halleck to countermand Grant's order. Lincoln also met with a Jewish delegation from Louisville and Cincinnati and expressed his regret at the incident.[8]

The disarray caused by the expulsion and by the voluntary exodus of other Paducah Jews set the community back only temporarily. Many were back in Paducah within a few years, and by 1866, there were again about thirty Jewish families in town. Post-war Paducah benefited from its proximity to the former Confederacy as the devastated South began to rebuild. As one merchant recalled, "This commercial activity brought back refugees who had left during the war, and attracted settlers from other sections of the country, as well as from Europe."[9]

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[8] Ash, "Civil War Exodus," 518-20; Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 125-26. A subsequent letter from Halleck to Grant still betrayed the impact of antisemitic images of Jewish business. Halleck assured his subordinate that Lincoln certainly had "'no objection to your expelling traders & Jew pedlars, which I suppose was the object of your order.'" It did not occur to Halleck to separate the category of "Jew" from the category of obnoxious commercial types.

[9] Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah, 51-55.

Though Paducah was an extreme case, war-induced suspicions dogged Jews throughout the Ohio River Valley. The localization was not coincidental. In both South and North, Jews were accused of war-profiteering, but as a border area, the Ohio River Valley was particularly fertile ground for accusations of Jewish disloyalty to the Union, especially by illicit trade with the Confederacy. Early in the war, these accusations had already surfaced in newspaper articles in Covington, Louisville, and Cincinnati. In particular, Cincinnati Jewish textile and clothing merchants were accused of war profiteering by taking advantage of the Union Army's massive requirements for clothing and blankets.[10]

Overall, American Jews were just as divided on the sectional conflict as other Americans. "If it were possible to uncover and catalogue the opinions of all the Jews who lived in the United States during the years leading up to the Civil War," Bertram Korn has stated, "we should have to conclude that that Jews were represented in all the various shadings of opinion from fanatic abolitionists to fire-eating slavery proponents," though there were relatively fewer Jews at either extreme and "more in the middle

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[10] Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 159-63. Also, Avraham Barkai, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 115-17; Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 158, 186. American Jews consistently defended themselves against such calumnies. Lashing out at the local Republican newspaper (in the pages of Portsmouth's Democratic newspaper), Rabbi Judah Wechsler angrily defended the patriotism of American Jews: "I notice in the last number of the *Tribune*, a wrong and false statement, republished, which is, I believe, taken from the Chicago *Tribune* . . . . The extract, as published, reads thus: 'Will we have an [sic] dishonorable peace in order to enrich BELMONT, the ROTHCHILDS [sic], and the whole tribe of Jews who have bought up Confederate bonds, or an honorable peace won by GRANT and SHERMAN at the cannon's mouth.' There is not a word of truth in the whole statement. BELMONT is no Jew. ROTHCHILDS never bought any Confederate bonds, and is [sic] not interested at all in this war. The Jews are as honest, as loyal and patriotic as any other class of men . . . You must let the Jews alone; they love this Union better than you do, and their moral character can favorably be compared with yours . . . . I can only hope that the Editor of the *Tribune* did not closely examine the paragraph above, or he would not have published it" (Portsmouth Times 3:46 [October 1, 1864], 3). The original article appeared in the Chicago Tribune on September 10, 1864, and was reprinted in the Israelite on September 23 (Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 285).

ground." Generally speaking, Jews' positions were informed by the regnant ideology – either pro-slavery or pro-free labor – of the part of the country in which they lived. Southern Jews supported slavery and fought for the Confederacy; northern Jews supported the Union cause and fought as Federals.[11]

The Jews of the Ohio River Valley were clearly affected by the tensions within their region. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Ohio River functioned as both seam and border, and the sectional conflict heightened this duality. The Ohio River did not divide the Union politically; Kentucky never seceded and western Virginia renounced secession. But the river certainly straddled the Union culturally, especially in the lower two-thirds of the Valley, where southern cultural influence was marked. Already in 1856, Rabbi Bernard Felsenthal had upset his Madison, Indiana, congregation, with his outspoken support of the new Republican party. In Kentucky, a Union state with strong Confederate sympathies, some Jews served in the Union Army and some in the Confederate forces, as did other Kentuckians. And in Cincinnati, a controversy between Isaac Mayer Wise and his congregation illustrates some of the political tensions endemic to the Ohio Valley as a whole.[12]

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[11] Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 16. Avraham Barkai points out, quoting an historian of Jews in Atlanta, Georgia, there was probably an elective affinity at work in Jews' choice of where to settle: "[t]hose [immigrant Jews] who were squeamish about human bondage were apt to avoid [the South] or did not remain long" (Branching Out, 114).

[12] See Introduction about Ohio River as a border between, and a seam uniting, North and South. Some southern Illinois counties even debated seceding from the state and joining the Confederacy (Lois A. Carrier, Illinois: Crossroads of a Continent [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993], 59). On the other hand, anti-slavery was strong among immigrant Germans in Louisville, and Newport had one of only two abolitionist newspapers in Kentucky in the 1850s (Lowell H. Harrison, and James C. Klotter, A New History of Kentucky [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997], 123, 178). For Felsenthal, see 162, above.

Union soldiers included Henry Gumberts and Herman Salm of Evansville (History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana [Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889], 664; "100th Anniversary, Washington Avenue Temple, 1857-1957," Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, AJA). Gabriel Netter of Owensboro (Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah, 37-46), and Charles Rauch and Lesseman Straus

In responding to the sectional crisis, Wise's understanding of the needs of the Jewish community took precedence over all other considerations. He was ambivalent about slavery, but to him that was not the paramount issue. Wise believed wholeheartedly that American freedom was the only hope for the true flourishing and progress of Judaism, and he feared that the break-up of the Union would threaten this freedom. To Wise, the continuation of black un-freedom seemed a small price to pay for this security. Similarly, in his mind, abolitionism did not advance the cause of freedom, but was in fact a threat to it: hypocritically demanding the freedom of some people (the slaves), the abolitionists simultaneously threatened other people's freedoms with a Protestant "Christian America" agenda, indifference to Jewish rights, and hostility to immigrants generally.[13]

When the Union actually split, however, Wise considered it a greater threat to freedom to ignore states' rights and try to force the southerners back into the Union, than to let them go and maintain peace in the remaining sections. Therefore, he refused to

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of Parkersburg ("Centennial Service," B'nai Israel Congregation, Parkersburg, May 11, 1956; Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958, [n.p., 1963], 1168). Confederates included Gustav Ellenbogen of Smithland, Kentucky, Jacob and Joseph Ullman and Emanuel Fels of Paducah (Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah, 18, 52, 78).

[13] Sefton D. Temkin, Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 178-79. See also Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 24-27. Judah Wechsler of Portsmouth, who shared Wise's views, also expressed his impatience with abolitionists, especially those in the pulpit, whom he held responsible for the war. See, e.g., his statement to the Israelite, 10:5 (July 31, 1863), 36, quoted in Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 26. Wechsler's political pronouncements had a deleterious effect on his career. He had been rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, an emerging reform synagogue, between 1858 and 1861 (see 194, note 27, above), and desired to return there on the expiration of his Portsmouth contract in 1863. But his stands on the war made the pro-abolition Hoosiers leery, and they refused even to consider rehiring him because he was "disloyal" (Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 26). Somehow he managed to allay their concerns and was rehired the next year (Judith E. Endelman, The Jewish Community of Indianapolis [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984], 24, 30). More than twenty years later, as rabbi in Meridian, MS (1886-1895), Wechsler worked for educational opportunities for southern blacks, certainly a change from his earlier attitudes about religious and racial politics! He returned to Indianapolis in 1895, and died there in 1905 (Judah Wechsler -- Biographies file, AJA).

speak out either in favor of Union or in support of the war effort. But while asserting neutrality, he blamed the Republicans for the break-up of the Union and was in fact an active member of the Peace faction of the Ohio Democratic Party, the so-called Copperheads. In 1863, when the arch-Copperhead Clement Vallandigham was the Democrats' nominee for the Ohio governorship, Wise was even nominated for state senator on that ticket.[14]

Though much of the evidence was covered up, it is clear that this set off a major crisis in Wise's relationship with his congregation. The board issued a statement acknowledging that they felt "honored by this demonstration of confidence bestowed upon you," but "politely, but most emphatically" requesting that he decline the nomination. Ostensibly, the board was concerned that political activities would interfere with Wise's congregational responsibilities. Yet they had never before objected to his multitude of outside activities and frequent travels. "[P]olitics, especially in time of war," Wise's biographer observes, "was something on which they [Wises's congregants] had opinions of their own," and Cincinnati Jews were mostly Republicans.[15]

In a bizarre juxtaposition of antisemitic rhetoric and support of an individual Jew, the Democratic Cincinnati Daily Enquirer lambasted "the Shoddy contractors" – leaders of the Cincinnati Jewish community, many of them clothing manufacturers – for inhibiting Wise only because he was a Democrat and not, like them, Republican. Ironically, Wise's support of Vallandigham stemmed from a concern with Jewish

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[14] Temkin, Isaac Mayer Wise, 180-83; Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 40.

[15] Temkin, Isaac Mayer Wise, 183-84. Korn finds the congregation's response more alarming: "those who controlled the Jewish community in Cincinnati," he charges, "were willing to go to any length to prevent their rabbi's helping to elect Vallandigham." (American Jewry and the Civil War, 42).

equality and interests. Vallandigham had helped American Jews protest antisemitism abroad and had in 1861 opposed a military chaplaincy bill that provided only for Christian chaplains. Ohio Valley Jews were caught between a rock and a hard place; Cincinnati's Democratic papers criticized them for supporting the Republicans, but the Republican papers themselves repeated allegations of Jews "offensive conduct" in being "the most adroit smugglers."[16]

The challenges of the Civil War provided a quick course in Americanization for German Jewish immigrants; the war accelerated their social acculturation and raised their political awareness and participation. The Civil War era was also "in [an] economic sense, a transitional time for the Ohio Valley," as the importance of the river to the regional economy began to decline. The long-term effects of the war itself were mixed: while not changing fundamental local economic structures, the war exacerbated communities' pre-war tendencies toward growth, stagnation, or decline. Evansville industry was given a significant boost that enabled the city to move to the level of a regional center. Taking up the model of the "New South," post-war mayors of Paducah (especially Meyer Weil, a Jew) improved its city government, secured its financial base, and made important infrastructure improvements that aided trade and manufacture. Some towns, notably Cairo, experienced a war-time boom only to run out of steam by the late

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16 Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 43, 57, 130 (quote from Enquirer); Temkin, Isaac Mayer Wise, 187.

nineteenth century, unable to overcome its pre-war handicaps of a limited industrial base, no productive agricultural hinterland, run-down infrastructure, and flooding.[17]

After the Civil War, the challenges to Ohio River communities began to change. One of the secondary results of the Civil War was to give a significant boost to finance capitalism and industrialization and to their correlate, urbanization. American cities, which were on the rise before the Civil War, grew even more. "Industrial diversification," Sam Bass Warner writes, "spurred the growth of metropolises," as workers (both rural migrants and foreign immigrants) flocked to centers of employment and as new modes of operation further centralized both industry and commerce.[18]

Many Jewish businesses were positioned for growth as a result of wartime and post-war expansion. In the Jewish-dominated clothing industry, small shops became factories for mass production of army uniforms; after the war, they transferred their capacity to the growing ready-to-wear market. Among the clothing merchants making this transition were the Mack brothers of Cincinnati, who grew their business on the basis of government contracts for Union military uniforms. The economic expansion and

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[17] Quote: Darrel E. Bigham, "River of Opportunity: Economic Consequences of the Ohio," in Robert L. Reid, ed., Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 153-55. Also, Darrel E. Bigham, Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 125-39.

[18] Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 87. See also Zane L. Miller, The Urbanization of Modern America: A Brief History (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973) and Eric Monkkonen, American Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Philip Shaw Paludan's "A People's Contest": The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865 (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) discusses the economic and social changes (in the North) that developed from the experience of the war; "the forces of industrialization and war were linked," he points out (xi). For more on this, see the chapter on "The Civil War and the Postwar Industrial Revolution, 1861-1914," in Stuart Bruchey, Growth of the Modern American Economy (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1975), 73-114.

concentration that benefited cities – and urban Jews – came at the eventual detriment of smaller towns – and, of course, their small Jewish communities.[19]

By 1880, most of the Ohio River towns with Jewish communities had more than 5,000 population, and so had really moved into the category of small cities. A few had at least 10,000. In the longer term, from the late nineteenth century on, the relative importance of large and medium-sized cities outstripped that of small cities, but for the short term, at least the first quarter of the twentieth century, small cities retained a secure niche in regional urban networks.[20]

Small towns also remained a part of the Jewish experience – certainly a more important part than is usually credited. But there had always been relatively fewer Jews in American small towns, and the economic and demographic changes that led to the rise of the huge cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reshaped the landscape of American Jewry more thoroughly. Jews have always been the most urbanized segment of American society. In 1878, at least 83% of American Jews lived in towns and cities with more than 5,000 total residents, whereas only 25% of all Americans lived in such comparatively large places.[21]

Based on his study of 1878 population data, Lee Shai Weissbach notes how American Jews in the late 1870s were "highly concentrated in a relatively limited number of identifiable communities, both large and small." The vast majority (84%) lived in the

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[19] Re Macks: Diner, Time for Gathering, 80-81, 158. See other examples of Jewish businesses in Korn, American Jewry and the Civil War, 161.

[20] Monkkonen, American Becomes Urban, 76.

[21] Lee Shai Weissbach, "The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration: Some Comments on Geography and Bibliography," American Jewish History 78:1 (March 1988), 87.

160 American cities and towns that had at least 100 Jewish residents; almost three-fourths (71%) lived in the 26 cities or towns that had at least 1000 Jews. Despite this concentration, however, Weissbach notes, there were at least 868 localities in the United States with fewer than 100 Jews.[22]

The Ohio River Valley was probably even more concentrated than the national average. Almost all Jews – over 90% – living on the Ohio River lived in communities of at least 100 Jews. More than 80% percent were in the three cities with more than 1,000 Jews: Cincinnati (with 8,000), Louisville (with 2,500), and Pittsburgh (with 2,000). The 1878 data lists 13 Ohio River towns with fewer than 100 Jews; there were at least 15 more.[23]

The increased urban concentration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had critical ramifications for small Jewish communities. Weissbach notes that most of the places in the United States that had more than 100 (but less than 1000) Jews in 1878 failed to grow sufficiently to break into the larger Jewish population category by 1907. On the other hand, the number of towns in the middle range (100-999 Jews) increased to 524 by 1927. Of these, only 15% had Jewish communities established before 1878; obviously, therefore, small towns continued to be sites of Jewish growth.[24]

Elsewhere, Weissbach points out that taking into account the high mobility of Jewish immigrants, it is clear that "far more American Jews had passed through a small

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[22] Weissbach, "The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration," 83, 89.

[23] I have used the same data set as Weissbach, with the addition of some population for Ohio River towns not listed. In addition to the three major river cities, there were Jewish communities of more than 100 persons in Wheeling, Madison, Evansville, Owensboro, and Paducah.

[24] Weissbach, "Jewish Communities of the United States of the Eve of Mass Migration," 92.

Jewish community at some time during their lives than would be assumed from the fact that in any given year only a small percentage of the Jews in the United States lived outside the nation's major Jewish centers." Beyond mere demographic persistence, the small Jewish communities showed remarkable institutional persistence, holding together in order to hold on to Jewish life where they were.[25]

[25] Lee Shai Weissbach. "Stability and Mobility in the Small Jewish Community: Examples from Kentucky History." American Jewish History 79:3 (Spring 1990). 372.

## CHAPTER ONE: MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

In her 1992 history of American Jewry from 1820 to1880, Hasia Diner asserted that nineteenth-century small towns "tended to support tiny Jewish communities for just one generation. After a few decades, Jews who lived in small towns usually ended up in larger communities. A string of Jewish 'ghost towns' stretched through the Ohio River Valley, the Mississippi Delta, and the mining frontier of California and Nevada." Admittedly making a broad generalization, Diner gave no specific evidence or examples for her statement; rather, she articulated a common perception. After all, many observers have noted the number of decrepit small towns with surviving Victorian store buildings emblazoned with Jewish names.[1]

The signs of this apparent disappearance of small town Jews – in contrast to the high visibility of urban Jewish institutions and (to inside observers) of Jewish speech,

[1] The quote is from A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 57. Diner's statement about common perception comes from personal communication.

mannerisms, and dress – can be misleading. As we have seen in Weissbach's studies, individual Jews may come and go, but in the small towns, Jewish population and a sense of community persisted, even in the absence of successful communal institutions.

Ironton, Gallipolis, and Pomeroy, Ohio, in the mid-Ohio Valley, are cases in point. Ironton's nascent congregation of 1874 seems not to have sustained itself. But Jews continued to move into as well as out of Ironton and there may even have been a new women's organization around 1900. The Gallipolis congregation was active, to some extent, for at least two decades, for the local paper reported in 1884 that a student from Hebrew Union College had led an "interesting" Rosh Hashanah service "in the room back of the Council Chambers in the Shober block." Certainly, though, the congregation was defunct by the turn of the century. But there were still three Jewish-owned clothing stores and about a dozen Jewish families. Lacking railroad connections, the town of Pomeroy declined along with river traffic, to become a "dingy, gloomy" coal town, but as a regional retail center, there were still Jewish stores into the early twentieth century. And Jews in these towns continued to make connections with Jewish institutions in Portsmouth, Ohio, Ashland, Kentucky, and Huntington, West Virginia.[2]

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[2] Re Ironton: American Israelite 46:40 (April 5, 1900), 4. The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia reported the existence of a congregation in Ironton (Vol. IX:390); I suspect the reference is to this group. Stories of individual Jewish residents include that of Adam and Matilda Weiler (Autobiographical questionnaire, Leah Weiler Rosin, January 4, 1979, Biographies File, AJA) and of Ike and Sadye Cohen Mearan (Eugene B. Willard, et al, eds, A Standard History of The Hanging Rock Iron Region of Ohio [n.p., Lewis Publishing Co., 1916], 775). Re Gallipolis: An 1889 American Israelite article reported eight families (36:13 [September 26], 2). In 1906, a national Jewish organization reported a dozen families (Town Data Report, Industrial Removal Office files, Box 123, American Jewish Historical Society). Two of the Jewish stores belonged to families who had settled in the mid-nineteenth century, Harry Frank's Sons (run, as its name indicates, by Harry's sons Jacob and Samuel) and Abraham Moch's. The third store, a branch of Zeigler and Sons of Huntington, occupied a building previously occupied by an earlier Jewish store, that of Morris Moses. See also Ohio Archeological and Historical Publications 3 (1895): 23; Gallia County Glade 4 (Winter 1995): 59, 66. Re Gallipolis congregation: Gallipolis Bulletin 17:44 (September 23, 1884), 3. Also in 1879, Rev. E. Strauss had advertised in the American Israelite for someone to lead services on the High Holidays (33:11 [September 12], 3). Perhaps the congregation became inactive after Strauss's death, though I don't know when that was. Re Pomeroy: Michael P. Marchione, "Economic Development and

Some Ohio River Valley towns got a new lease on life as the effects of late nineteenth-century industrialization spilled over from Pittsburgh into the upper valley in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. Similarly, towns such as Parkersburg and Huntington, West Virginia, benefited from mining, petroleum, chemical and related industries. In these places, which were moving to small-city status, new Jewish organizations arose after many years of small population.

Many mid-nineteenth-century communities erected new institutional structures in the latter part of the century, fitting into the Americanized Reform synthesis and aligning it with small-town culture. Around 1880, thirty years after the first Jewish settlers, Jews in Henderson, Kentucky, also began to regularize their Jewish life. In 1884, the women organized a Hebrew Ladies Auxiliary, which obtained a Jewish cemetery and organized a school. In the mid-1880s, High Holiday services were held in various locations, and in 1887, Congregation Adas Israel was incorporated. Shabbat services were held in rented rooms until 1891, when Morris and Henry Baldauf donated land for a temple, spurring their fellows to action by specifying in the deed that the building must be completed and paid for within two years. This challenge was no doubt meant to secure a permanent place for Judaism in Henderson's social landscape. And Henderson's Jews were well in the mainstream of late nineteenth-century American classical Reform Judaism. At the cornerstone laying for the new temple, in July 1891, they listened approvingly as Leo Franklin of Hebrew Union College declared, "The Israelites are not a nation -- they are a

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Settlement Patterns in the Flood Plain of the Upper Ohio Valley" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1971), 339-45; Illustrated Historical and Business Review of Meigs and Gallia Counties, Ohio, for the Year 1891 (Coshochton: Union Publishing Co., 1891), 61; Pomeroy Tribune-Telegraph (April 8, 1903), 4.

religious body banned [sic] together to promulgate a belief in the Oneness of the Creator."[3]

In Paducah, Kentucky, a new, explicitly Reform congregation was incorporated in 1893 as successor to Bene Yeshurun. The choice of the unimaginative name of Temple Israel, easily identified as Jewish, signified an acculturated self-understanding (more accessible than the more obscure older Hebrew name), and the dedication of a new building on Broadway, Paducah's main thoroughfare, announced the Jews' central place in Paducah's life. Paducah's Jewish population was then about 300 individuals. The temple's membership roster listed 90 heads of family, suggesting that a large majority of the Jewish community formally affiliated religiously. Most male temple members were also members of the local B'nai B'rith lodge.[4]

Perhaps inspired by Paducah, the nearby Jewish community of Cairo, Illinois, established Montefiore Congregation, also explicitly Reform, in 1894. The congregation had to make compromises to function effectively. Services were held alternate Sunday evenings, a choice which may have been made to accommodate the "many travelling men" who attended services along with "all the Jewish citizens" of the town. Unlike Paducah, which had the resources to hire a rabbi, Cairo's services were led by Robert Bernard Sadler, a local clothing merchant. In 1897, Sadler was elected permanent rabbi

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[3] Frieda J. Dannheiser, The History of Henderson County, Kentucky (Henderson, Ky.: Henderson County Genealogical and Historical Society, 1978), 302. The women's auxiliary retained control of the cemetery property until 1892, when they formally conveyed it to the congregation. S.O. Heilbronner, "History of the Jews and the Congregation Adas Israel" (Henderson, Ky., 1942), SC-4902, AJA (not paginated). Founders of the Auxiliary included Hannah Oberdorfer, Jennie Heilbronner, Cecelia Oberdorfer, and Bertha Mann. Among the incorporators were Morris and Henry Baldauf, Moses Heilbronner, Herman Schlesinger, Edward Oberdorfer, Herman Lauchheim, Isaac Mann, and Ike Loeb.

[4] Isaac W. Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah: Temple Israel, 1912), 73.

and, in 1899, was even admitted to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, though he was probably not ordained.[5]

Cairo's situation suggests one of the many problems facing small Jewish communities as they struggled for stability and continuity and to maintain institutions that would meet local Jewish residents' needs until well into the twentieth century. The story of Portsmouth's B'nai Abraham from its 1858 founding through the early twentieth century, attests that this was not an inconsequential achievement and provides a good indication of the sorts of communal concerns these small town Jewish institutions were called upon to address.

Congregation B'nai Abraham was the most important, though not the only, institution of Jewish communal life in Portsmouth. Most local Jewish men joined, though occasionally someone would drop (and usually resume) his formal affiliation, often because of financial problems. A small group of men took seriously the business of running it; they rotated the offices among themselves, raised money and kept track of funds, maintained the synagogue building, and dealt with communal crises as they arose.

[5] "The Jews of Illinois – Part Second – Jewish Communities Outside Chicago," Reform Advocate 21:11 (May 4, 1901), 378; Letter from Irene Hodge to Al Cohen of the Illinois State Historical Records Survey, October 18, 1939, AJA Coll. #206, folder 1; also WPA Historical Records Survey report (form is dated 1936, but information is from 1938 or 1939). The small congregation that organized in Cairo in 1863 seems to have collapsed sometime around 1878, for reasons that are unknown, but may have been related to disputes over reform. There are conflicting stories of the congregation's situation. The Reform Advocate article (source of quote) claims that the congregation, which was Orthodox, dissolved in 1878. Later local memory says that there were both Orthodox and Reform services, which after 1878 were held in private homes. This suggests that orthodox and reform factions may have gone their separate ways for a time. The new congregation was evidently named in honor of British Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore, who died in 1885, but there is no indication of why the name was chosen. Sadler was elected to the CCAR on the personal recommendations of Rabbis Isaac Mayer Wise and Hyman Enelow of Paducah.

Congregational meetings were a forum for wrestling with the practical and philosophical issues of developing American Judaism in a small town.[6]

It is clear, for instance, that kashrut remained an important observance for some Portsmouth Jews at least until the turn of the century, and supervision of kashrut standards was the congregation's responsibility. In 1867, an outraged Matthias Schloss alleged that butcher A.H. Levi not only overcharged for kosher meat but also "that he dont keep his kosher meat in such a condition as our Jewish Religion will admitt, as I have seen myself a Piece of Hoge Mead and a Piece of Kosher Mead laing on the same Plate. I also believe that it is weight on the same scale and Cutt with the same Knife." A few years later, the board promulgated "Rules and Regulations between the Butcher and Shochet" to settle apparent disputes over the butcher's work schedules and fees.[7]

The religious school was also a source of concern. Nineteenth-century American Jews experimented with many formats for Jewish education, from day schools to private tutors. Where only a few Jewish families lived, they could together try to hire a private teacher for their children. In small congregations, the Sunday school format (adapted from the Christian model) predominated. American Jews innovated in curricula, creating child-centered and age-appropriate texts that drew on the insights of American public school reform, rather than immediately immersing children in the original Bible and

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[6] Note on synagogue membership: any adult man could be a member; a woman could only if she was a widow.

[7] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book 1863-1896 (Box X-54, AJA), April 27, 1867 and October 9, 1870. Original spelling retained. The abandonment of kashrut was not yet a hallmark of Reform Judaism, and a number of congregations continued to hire shochtim even after definitively moving to other reform practices such as use of an organ; kashrut was an area of great conflict and variability for American Jews generally (Diner, Time for Gathering, 127-30).

Talmud texts, as was the practice in Europe. As with the public schools, school policy-making was vested in the community, especially the parents.[8]

B'nai Abraham's supplemental school, which met on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons, operated along these lines. It used special texts for teaching Hebrew alphabet and grammar and A Child's First Bible, adapted by Rabbi Frederic de Sola Mendes. Initially the curriculum included both Hebrew and German, but the latter was dropped in 1877 as the parents themselves discarded the old language (congregational meeting minutes were recorded in German until 1872, and some sermons were given in German as late as 1878).[9] More troublesome was the logistics of a small school. When the congregation had a "reverend," he did double-duty as schoolteacher. In 1877, with twelve children enrolled in the school, Rev. Isaac Stempel protested that it was too much for one person to handle. But the congregation's board reiterated very specific requirements: to "hold sabbath school up stairs from 2 to 4 p.m. both classes at one time, and to sit the children on the south side benches to prevent them from looking out the window. On Sunday he may divide them in 2 classes at different times . . . . any other arrangements would be too expensable [sic] to keep up the school during the Winter . . . ."[10]

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[8] Diner, Time for Gathering, 134-35, 217-18. Not so incidentally, the model of the American public school provided more opportunities for girls to obtain Jewish education than would have been the case if the European Jewish *heder* model had been followed. Some who chose the private route included the two Rosenbaum families of Mount Vernon, Indiana, who advertised in the Israelite in 1864 for a Hebrew and German teacher (Israelite 10:6 [August 5, 1864], 24) and the Adler family who hired Bernhard Felsenthal.

[9] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 4, 1877, April 23, 1876, and October 28, 1877; for other uses of German, January 7, 1872, September 5, 1875, October 13, 1878.

[10] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 11, 1877.

The congregational board had to resolve disputes among members, many of which are alluded to – if only obliquely – in meeting minutes. In January 1872, for instance, John Eisman and Abraham Nathan requested a special meeting to discuss "one of the most flagrant violations [that] has been perpetrated by one of the members," and a committee was appointed "to investigate the wholesale disturbance between the Congregation and Mr. E. Heidingsfield" [sic – Heidingsfeld].[11]

The congregation also took responsibility for communal welfare and cohesion. In November 1876, it paid Esther Silber's burial expenses, and nine months later, those of her husband. Several members volunteered to make arrangements for the six Silber orphans, the eldest of whom went to live with relatives and the youngest of whom went to Cleveland's Jewish Orphan Asylum. Isaac Mayer had never joined the congregation, but (perhaps at the urging of his wife Emma), the board permitted the Mayer children to enroll in the religious school on a tuition basis. When Mayer died in 1875, his funeral was conducted by his fellow Masons, but at Emma's request, he was buried in the Jewish cemetery.[12]

Most of the board's meetings were occupied with calculations of income and expenses, in an effort to keep the congregation solvent. Until the late nineteenth century, the need for rabbis in America far outstripped the supply; by and large, all but the largest congregations made do with non-ordained professionals, who had a job description of

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[11] The record is silent on the nature of the dispute, but it may have had to do with the congregation's cemetery. One of the Heidingsfeld children died in December 1871, and perhaps the terms of the burial were disputed. One hopes they were, as the Heidingsfelds shortly needed the cemetery again: two more of their children died in February 1872. Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, January 7 and 28, and February 4, 1872.

[12] Re Silber family: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 5, 1876, August 28 and September 10, 1877. Re Isaac Mayer: Portsmouth Times 14:45 (September 4, 1875), 3; Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, April 27, 1874, and August 29, 1875.

"teacher and preacher," "*chazan*," or even "minister," and generally used the honorific title of "Reverend." In the case of smaller – and therefore less wealthy – congregations, finding even such semi-professional leadership was a source of perpetual difficulty. After Judah Wechsler left Portsmouth in 1864, rabbis (or reverends, as the case may be) came and went with disruptive frequency, generally in a two-year cycle.[13]

In the fall of 1873, Solomon Kaufmann of New York City was elected minister, with the understanding that he should "conduct our services strictly Minhac [sic] America." He must have pleased someone, because in August 1874, he married Betty Eichelstein, daughter of Mayer Eichelstein, president of the congregation. Isaac Mayer Wise performed the ceremony, not neglecting to mention in his wedding prayer to "thank

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[13] Hiring rabbis was a source of competition among wealthier congregations (Alan Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840-1930 [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 1994], 95-97). Quality was as much a problem as quantity. In October 1879, a writer from San Francisco reported accusations against Jacob Vogelsdorff, the "rabbi" at Wheeling's Leshem Shomayim, in an American Israelite column entitled "The Pulpit Leper" (33:14 [October 3], 2). He claimed to know that Vogelsdorff, who had worked as a cigarmaker, was a drunkard who had abandoned a wife and four children in San Francisco. Fumed the writer, "I have never dreamed of such a thing that he would even, with all his native cheek, present himself as a 'Rev.' in any pulpit, even in this country, where these titles are cheaper than mess-pork in Cincinnati." Though the notables of Wheeling responded immediately in Vogelsdorff's defense (American Israelite 33:16 [October 17, 1879], 7), the "pulpit leper" did not last more than a year with them (Temple Shalom 140th anniversary booklet, 1989, SC 12958, AJA).

Portsmouth's reverends included a Rev. Lesser (or Lazer) from 1864-66, Gabeicher (or Gabricher) from 1866-68, Elias Eppstein from 1868-1870, and Milton Weil, who died at the age of 30 in 1871, his second year in Portsmouth, "after a painful disease [consumption, i.e., tuberculosis] of ten months' duration" ("Congregation Beneh Abraham 100th Anniversary 1858-1958," p. 8, AJA; Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, October 14, 1871.) Eppstein was later rabbi at B'ne Jeshurun in Milwaukee. His diary is at the American Jewish Archives. The unfortunate Weil was followed by the very intriguing Simon Gerstmann. Gerstmann was born in 1833 in the Poznan city of Kalisz, came to the United States in 1852 or 1853, and enlisted in the United States Army, serving as private in the artillery for five years. Whatever the fantasies of European Jews about the wilds of America, Gerstmann lived them – he was even wounded in battle with the Seminole Indians in Florida in 1856. After his discharge, Gerstmann embarked on the peripatetic career of a "reverend." Leaving Portsmouth after two years, Gerstmann continued to roam the United States as a "reverend," from the South to the Midwest to California, and back to the South and the Midwest. By the late 1880's, he settled in New York City, where he died in 1894 (Simon Gerstmann, Biographies File, AJA.) For his military career: Sylvan Morris Dubow, "Identifying the Jewish Serviceman in the Civil War," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 59:3 (September 1970), 360. Immigrants from Poznan had much stronger backgrounds in traditional Jewish learning, and so were often called upon to serve as religious functionaries for "German" communities in America (Diner, A Time for Gathering, 30).

God that we have found in this free country a land where we can worship the God of Israel with the greatest freedom." Solomon and Betty Kaufmann's first child was born in Portsmouth in July 1875, but in 1876, they left Portsmouth; the "ladies of the congregation" presented their erstwhile rabbi with a gold-headed ebony cane as a token of their affection.[14]

Kaufmann's successor, Samuel Laski, came up the river to Portsmouth from Louisville, Kentucky, but stayed less than five months. Congregational records give no clue to the reason for this extremely brief tenure. The congregation then muddled along for some time, interviewing candidates and making offers, but not succeeding until mid-June 1877, when they hired Isaac Stempel of Williamsport, Pennsylvania. It was a troubled relationship. When Stempel complained about work requirements, the congregation gave him notice, but six weeks later rescinded it. A year later, after A.H. Levi brought to the board charges against Stempel for "misconduct in the pulpit and slander of officers and members generally," they finally fired him. The board grudgingly agreed to provide a reference, but made it clear they would "testify only as is due him, and nothing more."[15]

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[14] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, December 21, 1873. It is possible that Kaufmann and Betty Eichelstein were already engaged when he arrived, or that they and/or their families were otherwise acquainted. In the records, Betty's father is in some places called "Mayer" or "Meyer" and in others, "Simon J." or (usually) just "S.J." There is no evidence that these various appellations do **not** refer to the same person, and much evidence that they do, though their lack of similarity is puzzling. Wise quote: Portsmouth Times 13:39 (August 8, 1874), 3. Wise made the most of his foray out from Cincinnati by travelling downriver to visit and lecture in Ironton, where his presence probably inspired the organization of the short-lived congregation. Kaufman birth announcement in Portsmouth Times 14:39 (July 31, 1875), 3. Re departure: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, June 11, 1876. Reportedly, they were returning to Europe. Re presentation: Portsmouth Times 15:33 (June 17, 1876), 2.

[15] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, July 2 and November 12, 1876; February 11, March 11, April 22, May 6, and June 17, 1877; March 3 and April 21, 1878; May 11 and June 1, 1879.

After this upheaval, and once again facing the difficulties and uncertainties of hiring a new man, B'nai Abraham reverted to a solution often used by congregations at an earlier stage of development: they hired one of their own. Mayer Eichelstein, who had been president of the congregation for probably ten years, accepted the job in June 1879. A local was more reliable, and since he had another line of work (a liquor business), he was also cheaper. Initially offered $500 per year, Eichelstein ended up taking $450, much less than the $700 Stempel received in 1878 or the $900 Gerstmann received in 1872. Also to the congregation's advantage, he continued to pay membership dues.[16] There is no record of Eichelstein's Jewish educational background that might have qualified him for the post. (He was born near Frankfurt, Germany, in 1823, and arrived in Portsmouth mid-century.) But Eichelstein provided the sought-after stability for the Portsmouth congregation: he served as rabbi for seven years, until his death in 1886.[17]

The financial crisis that prompted the decision to hire Eichelstein resulted from the fact that, through the 1870's and 1880's, the Jewish community had stopped growing. In 1884, there were reportedly only about twenty member families. This reflected a slowing in Portsmouth's phenomenal growth rate of the early nineteenth century. Between 1850 and 1860, the decade in which most Jews came to Portsmouth, the town's population grew by two-thirds, and between 1860 and 1870, by three-fourths. In the 1870's, it crept up by barely six percent. The board began actively to solicit memberships from young men.[18]

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[16] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, June 15, 1879 and May 23, 1880. For the practice of hiring local laity, see Diner, Time for Gathering, 126.

[17] Portsmouth Times 25:46 (September 18, 1886), 3.

[18] History of Lower Scioto Valley, Ohio (Chicago: Interstate Publishing Co., 1884), 219, 132; Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, July 26, 1885.

There was a small trickle of new members in these years. Jews settling in Portsmouth for business reasons. Z.J. Kaufman took over the former Lehman, Richman location for his own clothing store in 1873; when he died seven years later, his wife and son continued the business. Felix and Sigmund Haas, nephew and uncle, came from Cincinnati to open the Haas Clothing Company. Several Haas women operated a millinery shop together. Most of the new residents had been in the United States for some time, up to twenty years.[19]

But Portsmouth's in-migration was balanced by out-migration. By 1890, many members of the early Jewish families had scattered throughout the country: to Cincinnati, Chillicothe, Cleveland and Springfield, Ohio, and to Louisville, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and New York. In 1909, when the city went "dry," some Jewish liquor dealers pulled up stakes for other cities.[20]

With a few exceptions, congregational officers were still drawn from the same pool of individuals and families, and board meetings became less frequent. Requests for support for various projects from the UAHC always received the response that the congregation was too small to undertake them. But the synagogue's needs were always met. In the summer of 1884, the congregation was forced to make repairs to their premises following February floods. Funds were collected not only from individuals and firms (Jewish and Christian) in Portsmouth, but from a wide network of Jews outside the city, including former residents such as the Dryfuss family, now in Zanesville in central

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[19] Re Kaufman family: Portsmouth Times 13:40 (August 15, 1874), 3; Portsmouth Times 20:2 (November 13, 1880), 3; The Portsmouth Directory for the Year 1881-2 (Cincinnati: Spencer & Craig Printing Works, [1881]). Re Haas family: Personal correspondence to author from Nancy Lehman Ehrman, March 19, 1996.

[20] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, September 9, 1889. Re effects of local prohibition: Personal conversation with Bernard Levi, August 21, 1994.

Ohio, and the Ronsheims in Cincinnati. Leopold Eisman used his business contacts to solicit numerous small donations from firms in the garment trade, many in Cincinnati, though that city had also experienced the flood. The funds thus collected easily covered expenses.[21]

But Eichelstein's death in 1886 precipitated another series of crises of professional leadership. Applications for the position included H. Pollock of Milwaukee, and A.M. Bloch of Jackson, Mississippi. Both came for trial sermons, and in January 1887, Pollock was hired. But by December, he was fired on a petition from members complaining about "Gross insults" and was replaced by Bloch in January 1888. It was another disaster: in August, Bloch simply left town, apparently for another job.[22]

Fortunately for the congregation, the next minister was far more satisfactory. Abraham Schapiro assumed his duties as *chazan* and preacher at the High Holidays 1888. A native of Poland who studied rabbinics in Breslau, Schapiro came to the United States in 1887 and spent a year in Philadelphia before coming to Portsmouth. There is some question whether he had been formally ordained, though he was clearly knowledgeable enough for the congregation.[23]

Ten years earlier, Mayer Eichelstein had provided stability to the congregation because his personal interests as well as professional abilities conveniently converged.

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[21] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, July [?], 1882; October 14, 1883; June 8 and July 11, 1884; December 6, 1884.

[22] The board was irate, and resolved "to write to the Pres of Augusta Ga. the manner Rev Block acted and treated this Congregation." Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 14 and 21, December 5 and 12, 1886; January 7, December 11 and 20, 1887; January 22, August 12 and 27, 1888.

[23] Re Schapiro: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, September 9, 1888; correspondence from Maurice Schapiro to Jacob R. Marcus, December 11, 1968 (SC-10904, AJA). Re ordination status: Conversation with Bernard Levi.

Schapiro soon discovered the same coincidence of interests. The converse of Eichelstein, the local who became the rabbi, Schapiro was the rabbi who became a local. In 1892, he married Cecelia Schloss, whose family had been in Portsmouth since the 1860's. While still under contract as rabbi, Schapiro opened a bookstore with his wife, whose family was in the trade, and apparently business soon attracted him more than the pulpit, for in 1899, he attempted to resign from B'nai Abraham. Recognizing the dimensions of the dilemma, the board offered Schapiro a salary of $700 (up from $650) "if he would keep his store closed on Saturdays [and holidays]. He asked for a week to consider." With no evident options for the congregation, Schapiro – willingly or not – continued in the post until the fall of 1901.[24]

What kept B'nai Abraham and other small congregations from failing, either from lack of resources or from sheer exhaustion, was a comprehensive change in Hebrew Union College's approach to rabbinic training. As American higher education expanded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, seminaries too took part in what has been called the "culture of professionalism," emphasizing practical instruction and certification along with the study of sacred texts. In the 1890s, HUC began "with increasing frequency" to let upper-level students have weekend pulpits as a sort of practicum. From an institutional standpoint, "High Holy Days and often monthly or bimonthly weekend

[24] Re salary: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, May 17, 1899. Bracketed words are in a typed transcript which is filed with the manuscript minutes. Kimmy Caplan uses Schapiro as an example of an underpaid Reform rabbi in an article on rabbinic salaries ("In God We Trust: Salaries and Income of American Orthodox Rabbis, 1881-1924," American Jewish History 86 [March 1998], 88-89). Re contract: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 11, 1900, and October 13, 1901. After Schapiro left his formal pulpit position, he still occasionally led services, schechted chickens, and performed marriages. According to one of Schapiro's sons, "As a former rabbi he was entitled to sit in the front row of the temple but to his wife's disgust left that honor to the elders of the Jewish community" (Letter from Maurice Schapiro to Jacob R. Marcus). Another son became an attorney in Portsmouth and eventually served as president of B'nai Abraham (Obituary of Aronhold Schapiro, American Israelite, December 5, 1968).

student pulpits provided the added benefit of securing small congregations for the UAHC and the Reform movement."[25]

From the small congregations' standpoint, the system was vital to their survival. Starting in 1901, B'nai Abraham regularly employed an HUC senior, as did other congregations such as Adas Israel in Henderson. Being close to Cincinnati, Ohio Valley congregations had no difficulty finding an available student, and, as HUC expanded and then required the student pulpit program, the inconsistency of annual changes was offset by the reliability of the placement system in providing someone. While the Reform identity of such congregations was probably never in doubt, constant interaction with the movement made it possible for them to feel truly a part of a larger Jewish community.[26]

B'nai Abraham's story shows how important the survival of their unique Jewish communal life was to small town Jews, despite the obstacles they encountered. Using their own creative strategies and the resources of the institutional American Jewish community, they worked hard to ensure this survival.

In the late nineteenth-century, as West Virginia began seriously to exploit its mineral resources, Jewish communities emerged in two of the state's Ohio River cities, Huntington and Parkersburg. In both cases, the increased professionalization of organized Reform Judaism was central to their success. Times had changed. The small communities of the mid-nineteenth century had seen themselves as independent and self-

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[25] Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation, 135-136. The relevant seminal work is Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976).

[26] Re Portsmouth: Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, November 10, 1901, and October 14, 1906. Re Henderson: "History of the Jews and the Congregation Adas Israel."

sufficient entities; by the early twentieth century, the small communities were virtually missionary outposts.

The city of Huntington did not even exist until 1871, when railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington developed it as a river terminus for the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, close to the mining region. A year later, Samuel and Dora Gideon moved to town from the tiny Ohio River town of Manchester, in Adams County, about forty miles west of Portsmouth, and the following year, a letter to the Israelite reported that there were two Jewish families and four single young Jewish men among Huntington's population of 2800. (All were in the clothing business, but one who "buys and sells everything.") The Jewish population continued to grow. In 1888, the Gideons' daughter Ida married Moses ("Mike") Broh, a Cincinnati native who had recently moved to Huntington; eventually several of Mike's nine siblings and also his parents joined them. Huntington was immediately part of the large Ohio River Valley Jewish network: the Brohs were from Cincinnati, and had business and marriage connections to, among other places, Parkersburg and Ashland, Kentucky.[27]

In 1886, the community followed the pattern of earlier German Jews, founding a Reform congregation that they called Ohab Sholem; a cemetery association was founded the same year. There was also a German-Jewish social club, a Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, and later a branch of the Jewish Chautauqua Society. Though in

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[27] Quote from Israelite 21:6 (August 8, 1873), 6. Re Gideons: Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958 (n.p., 1963), 874, 963-64; "A History of the Jews of Huntington," The Reform Advocate, (October 7, 1916) 1, 4-11; 1870 manuscript census. The Gideons both emigrated from southern Germany, he from Baden-Wurttemburg in 1858 and she from Bavaria in 1865. They were married in Cincinnati in 1865 (by Isaac Mayer Wise) after Samuel's discharge from the Union Army; that this was the same year as Dora's immigration suggests the match was set up by friends or relatives. Re Gideon-Broh: Reform Advocate, 7-8; "The Descendants of Adolph and Henrietta Broh, compiled by Harry L. (Pat) Broh, July 15, 1985" (Genealogies File, AJA).

1892, the congregation was able to erect its own building, it did not employ a rabbi. Rather, religious services were lay-led, often by Sam Gideon, a founder and for many years president, "assisted by several of the young men."[28]

Parkersburg's Jewish community was much older and, by the late nineteenth century, well established, many residents having arrived thirty or forty years earlier. But they had still not formed any religious association, except for ad hoc High Holiday services. Despite the trend of nineteenth-century American Jews increasingly to identify Judaism solely as a religion, renouncing notions of "nationhood" or "peoplehood" and downplaying ethnicity, the Jews of Parkersburg were resolutely an ethnic entity. They organized a panoply of secular organizations. One was the Progress Club, a social club started in 1888 by second-generation members of the Newberger, Prager, Epstein, Nathan and Rauch families; in 1900, its membership represented a majority of the Jewish population of Parkersburg. There was a Ladies' Sewing Society and a Hebrew Ladies Aid Society as well.[29]

Hoping to expand its reach and affiliation level, the UAHC began in the 1880s to emulate successful Protestant strategies and experiment with "circuit preaching," that is, sending "uninvited rabbis into unserviced areas of America's hinterland" to conduct services and assist with Jewish education. In 1894, this Committee on Circuit Work was

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[28] Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 874-75, 891, 899; "Circuit Work in West Virginia," American Israelite 50:22 (November 26, 1903), 5. Re Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society: Town Data card – Parkersburg, 1909, Box 123, IRO papers. The congregation later changed the spelling of its name to Ohev Sholom.

[29] Re Progress Club: Program for "Centennial Service," B'nai Israel Congregation, Parkersburg, May 11, 1956 (citing American Jewish Year Book for 1900-1901). Re other organizations: Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), XII: 510. It is possible that this Jewish community was more closely "inbred" than other Ohio Valley communities. Of the twelve (identifiable) Jewish women who married in Wood County between 1880 and 1925, four married men from Wood County and four more married men from other places in West Virginia (Wes Cochran, ed., Wood County, W.V., Marriages 1880-1925 [n.p., n.d.]). Given the difficulty of exact and meaningful quantification in the case of small communities, I cannot claim too much, but these are interesting numbers considering the small Jewish marriage pool in West Virginia.

expanded and bureaucratized, and by the turn of the century, it was reaching some fifty towns, mainly in the South and Midwest. In 1904, Rabbi George Zepin took the helm of an expanded Board of Synagogue Extension, which, in addition to recruiting new UAHC affiliates, provided to small congregations resources such as educational materials and pre-packaged sermons. By using rabbis of larger regional congregations as District Supervisors, Zepin was also able to link the small communities with the larger American Jewish world.[30]

In addition to rural Jewish communities, the Board targeted "scattered Jewish groups inside cities of all sizes" and both Huntington and Parkersburg were in this category. Huntington actively expressed an interest and hosted Zepin for a visit in November 1903. Zepin offered the services of Leon Volmer, rabbi in the state capital of Charleston, and discussed with the group "some possibility" of setting up a circuit among Huntington, Ironton, Ohio, and Ashland and Catlettsburg, Kentucky. Whatever the results of these initial conversations, by 1916, the HUC rabbinical student posted to Huntington was also doing extension work in Ironton and Ashland.[31]

The Jews of Parkersburg presented more of a challenge. In 1875, Isaac Mayer Wise had failed to inspire them, and twenty-one years later, Charles Levi, assistant rabbi to the aged Wise at Bene Yeshurun in Cincinnati, made another attempt – probably under the auspices of the Committee on Circuit Work. "He was successful," the B'nai B'rith

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[30] Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation, 125-26, 185-89.

[31] "Circuit Work in West Virginia," 5; "A History of the Jews of Huntington," n.p.

monthly, Menorah, reported, "in so far that services were held during the holidays and a committee appointed to raise subscriptions with a view of having their own temple."[32]

Apparently, Levi was successful **only** in so far as he extracted this promise, because in 1903, the UAHC again turned its institutional eye on Parkersburg. Because of this new "circuit-riding" program, the American Israelite predicted, "The time seems to have come for many communities that hitherto have borne reputations for heedlessness in matters religious to live down that reputation. . . . In many cities the apparent religious indifference is merely the result of the lack of leaders. This appears to have been the case in Parkersburg. The people are, almost to a man, desirous of having religious services, and especially a Sabbath school. But there is wanting the leadership of a minister."[33]

No longer was it the expectation that congregation formation was the responsibility of each community's Jewish elite; the UAHC had now taken in hand having it done professionally. With this in mind, Zepin called a meeting on November 17, 1903, in Parkersburg, at which he offered that Rabbi Harry Levi of Wheeling could come twice a month to conduct services. The idea was discussed, in the words of the Israelite, "from various points of view" (perhaps indicating some controversy) and an organizational structure set up. Twenty-eight men signed on as charter members – a significant percentage of the total Jewish population, which probably numbered no more than 75 individuals.[34]

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[32] Menorah 21:4 (October 1896), 250.

[33] "Circuit Work in Virginia," 5.

[34] "Circuit Work in Virginia," 5. Shinedling (West Virginia Jewry, 1117) says the American Jewish Year Book figure for 1905 of 150 Jews in Parkersburg is too high, and the 1907 figure of 50 is too low. He puts the 1912 figure at 75, far below the yearbook's estimate of 400. Given the later trajectory of population, Shinedling is probably correct.

This approach seems to have had a limited success. A community history credits the Progress Club during this period with hosting religious services, led by a member, at their club rooms on downtown's Juliana Street; apparently the rabbi came from Wheeling for weddings or funerals. But in this case Zepin seems to have underestimated the critical role of lay leadership in sustaining the local congregation. With or without the visits of a circuit-riding rabbi, it was another six years before the basis of a permanent congregation was laid in Parkersburg.[35]

On October 25, 1909, twenty women and men gathered at William A. Hersch's United Woolen Mills building and gave themselves the temporary name of the Parkersburg Hebrew Congregation. The group described itself publicly as "semi-reformed" – an odd designation which, along with some issues that quickly arose within the group, suggest yet another reason for the community's avoidance of organized religion: a conflict between Orthodoxy and Reform.[36]

At subsequent meetings in the next few weeks, a constitution and set of by-laws was adopted, with the exception of a resolution for the congregation to use the Union Prayer Book, now the standard of the UAHC and Classical Reform. The rabbi who was hired in the fall of 1909, a recent immigrant from France who was apparently known to Reform leader Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, left the post in the fall of 1910; his role in the conflict is unknown. But in the spring of 1910, there was agitation in favor of holding Orthodox services for Passover. Within two years, the group had apparently fractured, for congregational minutes report that a motion was passed "to allow the Orthodox

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[35] Program for "Centennial Service," B'nai Israel Congregation, Parkersburg (AJA).

[36] The description of "semi-reformed" was given to the IRO on its Town Data card (1909).

Cong[regation] the use of the New Place of Worship of the Reform Cong. to hold Minion [sic] in anytime so it does not conflict with our Services."[37]

Not that a synagogue building was in sight in the near future. In 1910, a proposal to set up a building fund was voted down. For a while the group met in Hersch's building. Later various meeting rooms were rented, including those of the new B'nai B'rith lodge established in 1915. (These rooms were in the Wood County Bank building.) In 1930, the congregation received a bequest of $2000 towards a building fund, and in 1935, members agreed in principal to a building fund assessment of $250 each.[38]

But it was not until 1949 that a building was actually completed, on the basis of generous pledges from eight individuals. Only two of these individuals were from families that had been in the congregation since its inception. Several others had joined in the late 1920's. It seems that with a change of personnel, the Parkersburg Jewish community had finally left behind whatever old ambivalences or hostilities had existed before and pulled together under the banner of Reform. The community preferred to ignore much of its turbulent past and delayed development, characterized brightly by a temple history as "slow but steady progress." In 1956, B'nai Israel celebrated a "Centennial," with a Friday evening service, official temple history, and exhibit. Perhaps the congregation, now having an institutional identity and a new institutional building,

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[37] Congregation B'nai Israel records 1909-1956 (Ms. Collection 427, AJA), Oct. 29 and Nov. 10, 1909; April 11, 1910; February 15, 1912. Info re Rabbi Maurice Lesseraux: Stanley Bero to David Bressler, January 23, 1910, Travelling Agents, IRO papers; also Congregation B'nai Israel records, Nov. 10, 1909, and Nov. 26, 1910.

[38] Congregation B'nai Israel records, January 10, 1910; January 23, 1916; April 3, 1930; June 20, 1935.

also felt the need for an institutional past, but it is unclear what event 1956 was actually the centennial **of.**[39]

Thus small Jewish communities persisted in the towns of the Ohio River Valley. Even though their geographic location was no longer advantageous, they had secured a certain psychic location. On the one hand, they could see themselves as part of regional and even – through the UAHC – national Jewish networks. On the other hand, they occupied, by and large, a defined and increasingly comfortable niche in their towns of residence.

Small town Jewish life is often caricatured as one of two extremes: a morass of intermarriage or a snake-pit of backwoods antisemitism. Neither is true. There certainly was intermarriage and assimilation. In Gallipolis, for example, only three of Abraham and Amelia Moch's six children, born between 1878 and 1890, married, and all married non-Jews. Two spent their lives in Gallipolis, and nothing in their obituaries suggests that they retained any Jewish connection at all. To the contrary, their funerals (and that of a sister who died in northern Ohio) were conducted by Protestant clergy. One obituary simply alluded to the fact that the deceased's "grandfather lived in France, and his

[39] Re pledges: Congregation B'nai Israel records, correspondence folder. There are 10 pledges listed, from 8 individuals, most for $2500, but one for $5000 and another for $6000. One would expect that less wealthy members also pledged in smaller amounts, but no list is extant. Re centennial: Program for "Centennial Service." B'nai Israel Congregation, Parkersburg. Though it was no longer a source of severe conflict, members still acknowledged the existence of differences in preferred religious approach (more liberal or more conservative) in the late 1950s, according to a Conservative rabbi who served the Parkersburg congregation part-time in 1959-1960 (personal conversation with Rabbi Shimon Paskow of Woodland Hills, California, 2002).

grandmother resided in Germany" – evidently the way the family remembered their past when questioned by the local newspaper.[40]

In Paducah, however, virtually all members of the Dreyfuss extended family born in that same generation, and still living in the Ohio River Valley, married other Jews. Only in succeeding generations, and as descendants dispersed throughout the country, did intermarriage become significant.[41]

Small-town Jews **did** have options, and they exercised those options within a context both constricted by antisemitism and opened up by common citizenship. Their lives and their congregations were part of the fabric of small town life in the Ohio River Valley.

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[40] Moch Family Genealogy, Genealogies File, AJA; Obituaries of Emma Moch Ingels, February 15, 1960, of Blanche Moch Smith, June 28, 1965, and of Joe Moch, March 16, 1967, all in Gallipolis Daily Tribune.

[41] Dreyfuss Family Genealogy, Genealogies File, AJA.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE COMMUNITY WITHIN A COMMUNITY

The Jewish communities of the small Ohio River towns lived as constituents of a larger local society, and their position in this society was constructed within a matrix of others' and their own preconceptions and expectations. As American society groped towards a workable pluralism, Jews saw themselves – and were seen – as simultaneously similar **and** different, as both Americans **and** Jews. Presenting Judaism as part of America's public religious life, small town Jews emphasized the similarity of Jews' and other Americans' values and interests and affirmed the notion of "progress" so central to small-town boosterism.

While regional factors explained why the expulsion of Jews from Paducah during the Civil War happened in its particular place and time, the incident also serves as an example of the wider phenomenon of how antisemitism has tended to operate in the United States. Jonathan Sarna, in his historiographical article, "Anti-Semitism and

American History," has identified several factors distinguishing American from classic European antisemitism: the fact that it has always had "to compete with other forms of animus," especially racism; the ideological barriers created by the commitments to equality explicit in the nation's founding documents; and the coalition-building imperatives of American politics. And when antisemitism has occurred, John Higham has demonstrated, it has arisen not from strong ideologies but from "structural" factors, that is, from "a very real competition for status and prestige."[1]

This does not mean that antisemitism was made up out of whole cloth as an excuse for cut-throat competitiveness. Pre-existing "[s]tereotypes, by generalizing antagonisms, made discrimination possible; but they did not create it." Under specific circumstances – the social and economic competition Higham points to, or religious fanaticism, or nativism – the antagonisms latent in negative stereotypes of Jews could easily be activated into overt antisemitism.[2]

But in the American Protestant mind, negative stereotypes of Jews co-existed with positive ones to create what has been aptly termed "the ambivalent image." In her book

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[1] Jonathan Sarna, "Anti-Semitism and American History," Commentary 71:3 (March 1981), 46-47. John Higham, "Social Discrimination against Jews in America, 1830-1930," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 47 (1957), 1-33; quote on 3. Writing in 1957, Higham was emphasizing the contrast with Nazism. Louise Mayo adds "religious fanaticism [and] dislike of aliens" to "social and economic competition" as factors in activating antisemitism (The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth Century America's Perception of the Jew [Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988], 179).

[2] Higham, "Social Discrimination," 2. The question is one of proximate versus ultimate causes. Higham further develops the relation, and distinction, between ideological and social antisemitism in Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), especially Chapter 5, "Ideological Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," and Chapter 6, "The Rise of Social Discrimination." Naomi Cohen puts more emphasis on ideologies in general – and American Protestant religiosity in specific – as responsible for antisemitic discourse and activity (Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914 [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984], 249-85). Leonard Dinnerstein, while identifying social and economic stresses as exacerbating the manifestation of antisemitism in America, emphasizes the deep and even unconscious cultural substratum that enables it: "[s]imply put, Christian viewpoints underlie all American antisemitism" (Antisemitism in America [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], ix).

of that title, Louise Mayo has described "the complex and contradictory image of the Jew [which] was an elaborate and highly inconsistent stereotype." Most salient in antebellum and Gilded Age America were the religious and economic images. To American Protestants, Jews were, on the one hand, God's Chosen People, as evidenced by the Old Testament, and on the other hand, they were the Christ-killers, as evidenced by the New Testament. In the realm of economic life, the American Jew was on the one hand an exemplar of the Horatio Alger ideal of the self-made man; on the other hand, he was the descendant of the crafty and unscrupulous Shylock.[3]

Complicating the issue was the fact that over the course of the nineteenth century, as the Jewish population in the United States expanded, more and more non-Jews were coming face-to-face with the Jewish "other." Holding contradictory mental images of Jews, American Protestants' ambivalence was exacerbated by these personal contacts with **real** Jews; they experienced a "pervasive tension between the 'mythological Jew,' that cursed figure of Christian tradition, and the 'Jew next door' who seemingly gave lie to every element of the stereotype."[4]

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[3] Mayo, Ambivalent Image, 179-81. For instance, a stereotypical German Jewish peddler appears (among other grossly stereotyped characterizations) in a story of a fictitious mid-nineteenth-century riverboat trip, in H. Bennett Abdy's On the Ohio (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1919), 193-96. An aside: as a self-described "Gentile of American Puritan stock," critic Edmund Wilson had an interesting understanding of the relation between philo- and antisemitism. Admiration of Jews, Jewish history, and Jewish ideas can on the one hand develop into resentment of the demands of the Jewish God and on the other hand to disillusion with **real** Jews. Ironically, he notes, the strength of the concept of Jewish chosenness, which drives people like the Puritans to desire to share the special relationship with God, also leads those others "to assume that there is something supernatural about them [i.e., Jews]." "Notes on Gentile Pro-Semitism: New England's 'Good Jews'," Commentary 22:4 (October 1956), 329-35. Quote on 334.

[4] Sarna, "Anti-Semitism and American History," 44. The larger context of American religion, especially the conflict of religion and secularism, cannot be ignored. E.g.: In the late 1870s, Martin Marks gave a talk to the Madison, Indiana, congregation, the contents of which were reprinted verbatim in the local newspaper. Added the editor, derisively, "In the lecture on Judaism which we publish today is a singular exhibition of the power of religion to warp the human mind. The enthusiastic young Hebrew makes an eloquent appeal for liberty of conscience and straightaway, ere the words are out of his mouth, proceeds to denounce converted Jews in the most bitter and intolerant terms. Why should not a Jew enjoy the privilege of embracing Christianity without losing the affection of his People?" (quoted in Elizabeth Weinberg,

Sarna suggests that there were several ways in which American Protestants came to terms with this cognitive dissonance. Some engaged in suppression, that is, ignoring the dissonance and living with the inconsistency; others engaged in rationalization, considering the "Jew next door" as the exception to the rule of the stereotype. The strategy of elimination led some to "rid themselves of the problem by transforming reality to conform to expectations," especially by converting "good" Jews to Christianity, even if only in their literary imaginations. (Thus, those positive aspects of Jewish character are evidence of an inner, latent Christianness.) Other Protestants engaged in reconceptualization and, perhaps remarkably, began to defy the received wisdom and change their paradigm, accepting individual Jews on their own merits.[5]

Both consciously – through their self-presentation – and unconsciously – through their daily activities as citizens and neighbors – American Jews were participants in the process of reconceptualization. One very important arena was local politics. As Hasia Diner points out, "Local politics in America rested heavily with the mercantile class, and Jews as merchants had a particular stake in the stability of their communities." This was

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"Families and Personalities," typescript, 1998 [SC-14470, AJA], 18). While this comment may imply the inherent superiority of Christianity, note that it refers to the inimical effect of religion generally, not **some** religions or Judaism specifically.

[5] Sarna, "The 'Mythical Jew' and the 'Jew Next Door' in Nineteenth-Century America," in David A. Gerber, ed., Anti-Semitism in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 57-78. Sarna discusses how Jews encouraged both reconceptualization and elimination (of the tension between stereotype and reality). "A major thrust of the reconceptualization effort involved interpreting Jewish history so as to make the ancient Jew appear more respectable," whereas elimination "stressed the discontinuity of Jewish history and sought to distinguish modern Jews from their predecessors by casting off 'excrescences'" (70, 73). Because these two strategies usually worked in tandem, and "elimination" is really a method of reconceptualization, I see no practical benefit from distinguishing between them.

particularly the case in smaller towns, where "Jewish merchants were mainstays of town government."[6]

There are many examples from the small towns of the Ohio River Valley. Meyer Weil peddled in western Kentucky before the Civil War, then went into business in Paducah as a tobacco trader. A Unionist and Democrat (and described by a contemporary as "a distinguished looking man and fearless to the point of recklessness").Weil was elected mayor of Paducah for three terms between 1871 and 1881. After serving as city tax collector, he spent two terms in the state legislature. In Portsmouth, Ohio, in the 1870s, Isaac Mayer was active in local Democratic politics; he held city office and was, according to the Democratic paper, "pretty good on the run." Bernard Kahn, who lived intermittently in both Ironton and nearby Jackson, Ohio, for almost twenty years, was a member of the state legislature from Jackson County before moving to Cincinnati in 1878. In Henderson, Kentucky, Morris Baldauf served in city government in the late nineteenth century, as did Al Zilenziger in Parkersburg, West Virginia.[7]

Involvement in the running of public schools also served Jewish interests while projecting a positive image. Another Parkersburg Jew, Solomon Prager, demonstrated his civic commitment by providing in his will for the establishment an academic prize for

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[6] Hasia, Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 144.

[7] Re Weil: Isaac W. Bernheim, History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah: Temple Israel, 1912), 53-54. For announcement of Weil's mayoral election, Israelite 17:41 (April 5, 1871), 7. Re Mayer: Portsmouth Times 14:23 (April 10, 1875), 3. Re Kahn: Samson D. Oppenheimer, ed., American Jewish Year Book 5679 (1918-19) (Philadelphia: JPS, 1918), 228; Congregation Bene Abraham minute book 1863-1896 (Box X-54, AJA), May 12, 1878. Re Baldauf: Arthur Baldauf, interview by Darrel Bigham, Evansville, Indiana, 1974 (University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives). Re Zilenziger: Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958, (n.p., 1963), 1169.

boys aged nine through fifteen in the city's public schools. Rabbis were involved in school activities like other clergymen, as evidenced by this item from a local newspaper: "The Portsmouth High School Alumni have our thanks for a choice selection of sweet things, by the hand of Rabbi [Simon] Gerstmann. A splendid repast was served the graduates by Misses Jennie and Hattie Fisher [apparently non-Jews], at their residence, on Friday evening of last week." Through such activity, Jews could assert their interests in the face of evangelical Christian cultural dominance; in Cincinnati, where school politics played out on a larger stage, Jews even allied with Catholics in 1869 to keep Protestant religious instruction out of the public schools.[8]

A significant aspect of Jewish-Gentile relations that informed this reconceptualization was the Jews' position as merchants in an age that lionized commerce and "commercial men." "The Jewish merchant, in small and large towns," Diner writes, "came to be identified with civic order and communal stability. Business prospered when order prevailed, and Jewish merchants aligned themselves with the local status quo." But economic competition complicated these relationships.[9]

The best available source of information about nineteenth-century American Jewish economic life is the credit reports done by R.G. Dun and Co., predecessor to Dun and Bradstreet. Founded by Lewis Tappan in 1841, the firm used branch offices and local correspondents – businessmen, lawyers, and bankers – to collect information about merchants who were applying for credit from wholesalers. Occasionally the reports

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[8] Bernard Mandel, "Religion and the Public Schools of Ohio," Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 58:2 (April 1949), 185-206. Re Prager: Bernard Allen, Parkersburg: A Bicentennial History (Parkersburg: Bicentennial Committee/Woodroof Enterprises, 1985), 49. Allen also reports that in 1921, another Jewish resident, Ben Nathan, established a parallel prize for girls (101). Re Gerstmann: Portsmouth Times 12: 35 (July 5, 1873), 3.

[9] Diner, Time for Gathering, 79.

included hard data on a business's finances, but more often they were simply evaluations based on subjective impressions, local reputation, and even deliberate malice. As such, they are also useful guides to the operation of stereotypes within the "ambivalent image."[10]

In the small towns of the Ohio River Valley, as elsewhere, local agents often mentioned a subject's Jewishness in their reports regardless of whether they gave a good or bad credit rating. This evaluation of Joseph Emsheimer of Portsmouth – "A Jew . . . . small but regular business" – is typical. More often, though, the apparent contradiction between the Jewish stereotype and the individual's reputation is blatant. Meyer Heyman of Wheeling was described thus: "Is as good as a Jew can be without owning R[eal] E[state]; consid[ere]d very well off by the [local] merchants." Simon Moses was, the Madison, Ind., reporter noted, "a Jew & we would say not v[er]y reliable, but has here to fore [sic] had the reputation of being prompt in meeting demands vs. him." The same

[10] For an overview of the collection of Dun manuscript reports, now housed at Baker Library of Harvard Business School (HBS), and a case study in their use, see Stephen G. Mostov, "Dun and Bradstreet Reports as a Source of Jewish Economic History: Cincinnati, 1840-1875," American Jewish History 72:3 (March 1983), 333-53. See also James Madison, "The Credit Reports of R.G. Dun & Co. as Historical Sources," Historical Methods Newsletter 8 (September 1975), 128-31. The Dun collection covers 1841 to 1890, with most of the activity in the 1850s-1870s. I sampled the following volumes/years from the Ohio River Valley: Ohio Vol. 32 (Columbiana Co. 1880-1889), Vol. 110 (Lawrence Co.1853-1888), Vol. 70 (Gallia Co. 1849-1889), Vol. 193 and 194 (Washington Co. 1845-1888); Indiana Vol. 92 (Posey Co. 1859-1889) and Vol. 50 (Jefferson Co. 1857-1889); West Virginia Vol. 34 and 35 (Ohio Co. 1845-1880) and Vol. 54 (Wood Co. 1858-1879); Kentucky Vol. 4 (Boyd Co. 1861-1879).

David Gerber's study of antebellum Buffalo, N.Y., concludes that the city's white Protestant business elite was concerned with maintaining social order in the face of Irish and German immigration at the same time as they worried about the moral repercussions of their own practice of capitalism. Therefore, while maintaining a respectful public rhetoric about Jews, even praising Jews and Jewish habits in the press, Protestants savaged them in the commercial arena (e.g., in Dun credit reports). David Gerber, "Cutting Out Shylock: Elite Anti-Semitism and the Quest for Moral Order in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Marketplace," in Gerber, ed., Anti-Semitism in American History, 201-32. Elsewhere, Gerber suggests that negative assessments of Jewish businesses often reflected "differing cultural patterns shaping such vital aspects of economic behavior as partnership formation [e.g., transferring legal titles to avoid bankruptcy], work habits [e.g., working "too hard"], and risk-taking [e.g., frequent mobility and business expansion]" ("Ethnics, Enterprise, and Middle Class Formation: Using the Dun and Bradstreet Collection for Research in Ethnic History," Immigration History Newsletter 12:1 [May 1980], 4). There are many examples of this lack of understanding in credit reports for Ohio Valley towns, but I found no obvious pervasive pattern of malicious reporting (with the exception of one reporter in Madison, Indiana, in the 1860s).

reporter noted of Ascher Hoffstadt that "there is a suspicion that he will fail but still we see no outside reasons why he should." George Newberger of Ironton was "a Jew, but has the reputation of being hon[est]," and Marx Graff of Wheeling was "a Jew, the best of his race whom we have known."[11]

But between the lines, there is sometimes a hint that a Gentile reconceptualization of Jews is underway. In the reports from several towns (Gallipolis, Ironton, and Marietta, for example), comments about a subject's Jewishness are far more common in the 1850s and 1860s than they are in the 1870s and 1880s. Comments in the later years tend to be about Jews who are new in town. Over the course of time, it seems, a Jewish merchant could "prove" himself. The credit history for Simon Horkheimer provides an example. In 1860, the Wheeling reporter noted that Horkheimer and his partner "we suppose to be good but own no R[eal] E[state]. They are Jews and you know how far to trust them." By 1867, Horkheimer is "one of the few good Jews we have in the city." Within a decade, references to Horkheimer's ethnicity have disappeared, his credit rating is always "very good" – he is even "one of our leading men," a city councilman, director of a local bank and an insurance company, owning "fine R[eal] E[state]." Through his civic activities, Horkheimer the Jew has become Horkheimer the respectable.[12]

The critical factor is that Jews were not only business competitors to small-town Gentiles, they were also allies in the business of civic advancement. Being part of a

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[11] Emsheimer: Ohio, Vol. 70, p. 96, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS (entry date is 1871). Heyman: West Virginia, Vol. 34, p. 121 (1864). Moses: Indiana, Vol. 50, p. 109 (1862). Hoffstadt: Indiana, Vol. 50, p. 108 (1861). Newberger: Ohio, Vol. 110, p. 84 (1858); West Virginia, Vol. 34, p. 173 (1845).

[12] West Virginia, Vol. 34, p. 9 and Vol. 35, p. 303, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS.

desirable class (merchants) in a classic bourgeois society, Jews in the small-town Midwest had every reason to think they had a good chance at being accepted into society. And through a careful presentation of their updated, reformed Judaism, Jews could share with Gentiles their new understanding of Judaism as an **American** religion.

A positive attitude about Jews as successful merchants and as fine bourgeois citizens appears in local newspaper reports of Jewish social and congregational life.[13] Jewish social events were reported with the same boosterish alacrity applied to non-Jewish news. The Portsmouth paper reported how Jennie Herzog, "a Portsmouth belle," had attended a "Jewish ball" in Ironton, and that the wedding of Mose Wise and Clara Lehmann was attended by "the elite of our Jewish society with a fair sprinkling of favored Gentiles." The prosperity and public leadership position of the Rosenbaum family meant the local paper in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, kept up with their activities: how Daniel Rosenbaum bought both a farm property and a lot in town, with the intention of

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[13] Diner (Time for Gathering) is skeptical when assessing this sort of evidence. She argues that newspaper articles constantly "gauged the worth of Judaism" (184): i.e., complimentary remarks subtly implied negative judgments (196): the mention of the "grandeur" of Jewish weddings reflects suspicion of an alleged Jewish "tendency to flaunt wealth" (183); Protestants viewed any praise of Judaism or its institutions as a critique of Christianity (184). My reading of the local Ohio River Valley papers does not support this interpretation; these stories do not stand out from their context (subject, writing style) in a negative way. Diner thinks that Protestant interest in the "ancient" aspects of Judaism reflected their own anxiety about changes in American Protestantism (180). One such paean to the "sublime antiquity" of Judaism, from a Pomeroy Protestant, came to a rather different conclusion, a slightly marred universalism: "It was another proof of the goodness of God, who . . . vouchsafes alike to the imaginative Hindoo, to the degraded Pagan, to the sensual Mohammedan, to the unchanging Jew, and to the Christian . . . that soul's religion which can reach him best" (Meigs County Telegraph [March 3, 1857], 2). In this regard, Diner quotes several Protestant sources critical of Jewish religious reform (181-82). I have no material like this from any of my communities.

As for the suggestion that newspaper writers' praises of new synagogues (as, e.g., "most superior") contained an implicit critique of Jewish ostentation (184), she underestimates the importance of booster rhetoric in small town newspapers. Almost everything in small towns was "superior" – from the new store on Main Street to the size and quality of Farmer Smith's eggs! See, for instance, the descriptions of Portsmouth's Catholic churches in a local history: the churches "present a worthy and lasting monument to the enterprise and religious zeal of the people of that religion" and one of them is "among the finest in the state." Costs for everything – construction, pipe organ, altars – are included (History of Lower Scioto Valley, Ohio [Chicago: Interstate Publishing, 1884]). When this is mentioned in stories about synagogues, Diner interprets it as an obsession with Jewish wealth.

Most seriously, Diner here treats Jews as curiously passive objects – not at all her usual approach.

opening a dairy business in the country and erecting a $25,000 residence in the city; how Daniel and his brother Moses opened a new retail store; and how Moses' 23-year-old son Jacob had "the finest buggy and horse in the city" – all this in 1881 alone! In 1882, the paper proudly reported the "profitable visit" to town of a relative of Manuel and Jacob Cronbach; when the relative "was told that our town is not improving as fast as it should be[, his] confidence in the future of Mount Vernon thereupon moved him to purchase $2,000 of this city's bonds."[14]

Small town life revolved closely around religious institutions, so newspapers also reported on Jewish communal activities such as the installation of a new rabbi, the dedication of a synagogue, or the election of congregational officers. The newspapers usually noted the dates of the High Holidays for practical reasons (since Jewish stores would then be closed). Other Jewish holidays were occasionally acknowledged, even if misunderstood, as in the 1875 Portsmouth Times article about Pesach which informed readers that "[d]uring this [holiday] time **nothing** but unleavened bread will be used for food by the members of the Jewish synagogue"! The populace of Portsmouth, Ohio, was informed in 1871 that B'nai Abraham's new rabbi gave his inaugural sermon in English rather than in German – a significant fact in a town with a large German immigrant element. By placing the synagogue in the foreground of American Jewish life, Jews could not only contribute to their own survival but also, by claiming a place on the small town's social map, aid and abet the process of Gentile reconceptualization.[15]

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[14] Portsmouth Times, 12:49 (October 18, 1873), 3; Vol. 25, No. 17 (February 27, 1886), 3; Ilse Dorsch Horacek, ed., It Was Written (Mt. Vernon: Posey County Historical Society, 1983), 12, 163, 47, 11, 79.

[15] Portsmouth Times 14:23 (April 10, 1875), 3 (emphasis added), and 10:39 (August 12, 1871), 3. In 1870, Scioto County was 12% foreign-born, and Portsmouth city was 20%. Of the foreign-born in the county, over 60% were German-born (Ohio census 1870).

Through the building of synagogues, Jews contributed to the moral stability of society. Writing about the new Adath Israel building in Owensboro, Kentucky, in 1877, the local newspaper commented, "Very general credit will be accorded the plucky congregation, who, right in the thickest of the political and financial troubles of the country, have succeeded in building in our midst a house of divine worship hardly second to any in the city." Religious respectability was explicitly linked to economic bona fides, as the story continued. "[T]he city owes much of its commercial reputation to the vim and enterprise of this class of people." The architecture of the synagogue was itself a significant statement of American Jewish identity. In its overall plan, and with its Gothic stained-glass windows, the building resembled local churches, suggesting a harmony of religious persuasions. But the fanciful miniature Moorish domes atop the façade deliberately suggested – through reference to the "Golden Age" of medieval Spanish Jewry – Jewish distinctiveness and even a taste of exoticism.[16]

Synagogue-building was a prime opportunity for staking out Jewish difference-within-sameness. By inviting the non-Jewish public to participate, in this and other Jewish communal activities, small town Jews claimed for their religion a place in public life as legitimate as Christianity's and simultaneously co-opted Protestants' agreement with that legitimacy.

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[16] Owensboro Examiner, August 17, 1877, quoted in Lee Shai Weissbach, The Synagogues of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 168. Also, Weissbach, "Bearing Witness," Kentucky Humanities (Winter 1994), 3. This architectural language was used in other nineteenth-century synagogues such as Temple Gemiluth Chessed in Port Gibson, Mississippi, and most famously in the Plum Street Temple of B'nei Yeshurun in Cincinnati. It was very popular in Europe, for instance in the 1866 Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue in Berlin and the 1859 Dohany Street Synagogue in Budapest (Geoffrey Wigoder, The Story of the Synagogue [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986]). German Jews, exaggerating the positive aspects of Jewish life under Islam in Spain, exploited a myth of inter-religious harmony while simultaneously distancing themselves from the "backward" Ashkenazi culture strongest in Eastern Europe. Many aspects of nineteenth-century German Jewish culture reflected this interepretation. See Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 34 (1989), 47-66.

The Jewish community of Portsmouth, Ohio, deliberately positioned itself in the mainstream of the town's life. As early as 1863, five years after its founding, the congregation was regularly listed in the local church directory on the front page of the Portsmouth Times. The dedication of the congregation's new meeting place, in 1864, was designed to emphasize this integration. Bespeaking the town's prosperity and the Jewish community's stability, it was the first permanent synagogue owned by an Ohio congregation outside a major city.[17]

The new synagogue was actually the old Masonic Hall in which the congregation had originally rented space. They now purchased two-thirds of the building, with the Masons retaining the third floor. The first floor housed a schoolroom and social hall, and the second floor, the sanctuary, which now featured mixed, or "family," seating. A crowd joined the procession which carried the Torah scrolls from the Ronsheim home, which had served as temporary meeting place during building renovation: "A fine band of music at the front of the procession, four girls dressed in white, carrying the rods of a splendid kind of curtain [a *chuppah*], under which the law was carried by the two oldest members of the congregation, then again four girls dressed in red, white and blue, and a large number of Israelites, as well [as] a great many Christains [sic] proceeded then to the synagogue." Whether or not there were in fact over five hundred people involved (as the rabbi, Judah Wechsler, claimed), it was a large crowd. The curiosity of many had no doubt been piqued by the notice placed by the congregation in the Portsmouth Times,

[17] Various issues of Portsmouth Times; Israelite 11:12 (September 16, 1864), 93. The other Ohio synagogues were in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Dayton.

inviting "all the ministry and their congregations, the court, council, press, and the citizens generally" to the festivities.[18]

The Presbyterian church choir provided the music, though at the official level the desired interfaith atmosphere was not achieved. Despite the invitation to the local Christian clergy, grumbled Wechsler in the Jewish press, "whether they thought it was unbecoming to their dignity, or whatever may have been the cause, but few were present. The catholic [sic] priest of the German church seemed even offended that he was invited to attend the dedication of a Jewish synagogue." The events confirmed Wechsler's conviction that the Christian clergy generally – "these fanatic priests" – were a "drag-chain" on the laity's natural movement toward "progress and enlightenment."[19]

But on the lay level, social integration and religious ideology seemed to reinforce each other. Christians donated to the Portsmouth congregation's building fund in 1864, as Jews would donate to church building funds. These donations expressed the

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[18] Israelite 11:15 (October 7, 1864), 116. Jonathan Sarna has noted that in several important mid-nineteenth-century American synagogues, mixed seating was introduced when congregations acquired new spaces, especially when they took over former church buildings whose fixed seating was not amenable to separation. However, he does note also that these arrangements caused no particular controversy, due to changing attitudes about the role of women and the family in religion. ("Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed [Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1987], 363-94. Of course, if congregations had seriously wanted to retain separate seating, they could easily have come up with creative solutions in these situations. The Portsmouth congregation had no such logistical concerns and chose to institute mixed seating.

[19] Israelite 11:15 (October 7, 1864), 116. Wechsler's comment raises the question of the relations between German Jewish and German Christian immigrants. This is a very complicated issue. In some cities (including Cincinnati), German immigrant Jews and Gentiles did not commingle. In other places, particularly smaller cities and towns (including, it seems, in the Ohio Valley), social relations were more cordial, though not intimate. There were some political and cultural congruences (see 174-75, above). Some Jewish intellectuals (for instance, Bernhard Felsenthal and David Einhorn) asserted a feeling of "spiritual" Germanness. Overall, the relationship between Jews on the one hand, and Germans and Germanness on the other hand, was complex, ambivalent, and changeable. See Barkai, Avraham, Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994), 175-90; Carl Wittke, "Ohio's Germans, 1840-1875," Ohio Historical Quarterly 66:4 (October 1957), 339-54; Cohen, Encounter with Emancipation, 60-62; Roger Daniels, Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life (New York: Harper, 1991), 152-59.

importance of cultivating a generally religious American culture as much as the importance of cultivating good neighborly relations. Publicly thanking the Presbyterians for their participation in the dedication, the Portsmouth congregation declared that "we hail with joy and gladness the liberal and enlightened spirit manifested by these ladies and gentlemen, and hope the time is not far distant when we will all meet as brothers and sisters in one Great God, who has created us all."[20]

In Gallipolis, too, Gentile support was part of the process of Jewish community building. To raise funds for a synagogue, the nascent congregation gave "public entertainments" such as the one announced in the Gallipolis Dispatch in March 1869, held at Frank's Hall and "enlivened with music and dancing." Later that spring, their fundraisers evidently successful, the congregation opened a small synagogue on the upper floor of a downtown building. The local newspapers carried stories of the Friday-evening dedication ceremonies, at which the *chazan* officiated as the Sefer Torah was placed in the ark. The prayers were in Hebrew, with the exception of a special dedicatory prayer in German; Torah commentary was also delivered in German. "The whole was impressive," wrote one reporter solemnly, "inspiring even the Gentile visitor with a sense of the purity and holiness of sacred things, and a reverence for the Glory of the Ancient Church." Commented another, "while listening to the pleasant harmony of the (to us) unknown tongue, we wandered back to the days of David, of Abraham and of Moses: in the far off ages of the past, when the forms and ceremonies, that we then beheld, were a part of the daily life of the pious, God-fearing Israelites of old."[21]

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[20] Portsmouth Times 3:46 (October 1, 1864), 3.

[21] Israelite 15:35 (March 5, 1869), 2; Gallipolis Dispatch 13:2 (March 26, 1869), 4. Quotes from Gentile observers: Gallipolis Bulletin 2:21 (May 5, 1869), [3?]; Gallipolis Dispatch 13:8 (May 7, 1869), 4.

Though Judaism's past was its most immediately appealing aspect to many Gentiles, the Jewish community made sure to emphasize its contemporary relevance. Gallipolis' newspaper reported on other events in the Jewish community, for the development of religious institutions, even non-Christian, was "one of the evidences of progress in our midst." A few months before the synagogue dedication, a reporter attended a public examination in the Hebrew school run by Mr. Strauss (who was also the *chazan*). The exercises included Hebrew and German reading and translation. "Mr. Joseph Emsheimer then spoke in terms of warm approbation of the progress of the pupils and predicted that a new era was about to dawn upon the Jewish denomination in this city," the story continued. "After he had concluded, a very elegant pyramid cake was cut and distributed among the children and all present."[22]

The ramifications of this transparency of synagogue life was also evident on the occasions of conversions **to** Judaism. Dana Evan Kaplan has found that by 1860, "intermarriage was creating an interest in and a need for conversions, and congregations were beginning to approve of them." Indeed, in 1864, Judah Wechsler reported at some length in the Israelite about a conversion he had performed in Portsmouth. The candidate was the fiancée of Dr. Daniel Mayer, an immigrant who had served as a Union Army surgeon in the Civil War. "An accomplished lady of Western Virginia, whose name was Ada Walker, renounced by her own free will, Christianity, and was for some time instructed in the principles of Judaism by me," Wechsler reported. He marveled at the fact that "Time has changed. While in former centuries there were recorded many

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[22] Re "progress": Gallipolis Bulletin 2:12 (March 3, 1869), 3. Re Hebrew school: Gallipolis Dispatch 12:51 (March 5, 1869), 3.

conversions from Judaism to Christianity . . . we are now enabled to record quite the contrary. Hardly a week passes off without any conversions to Judaism." After Ada Walker's formal conversion ceremony, Wechsler married her and Dr. Mayer. As a token of her appreciation, she presented the rabbi with an unique present – a handkerchief on which she had embroidered the Hebrew words of the Sh'ma. In 1869, the wife of Abraham Nathan, a grocer in Portsmouth, converted to Judaism. The couple had lived in town for about a year, during which time Mrs. Nathan reportedly attended synagogue faithfully every Shabbat.[23]

This public presentation of Jews and Judaism worked to reinforce both the sameness and the difference between small town Jews and their Christian neighbors. It emphasized Jews' bourgeois respectability while exposing non-Jews to new concepts. The discourse of civic gossip and boosterism helped create a sense of local cohesion and inclusivity.

The experience of Jewish-Gentile relations differed for small town Jews from the experience of those who lived in larger Jewish communities in the cities. Small-town Jewish life was in some ways less public – there were no large, imposing synagogues or obviously ethnic neighborhoods – but in other ways, it was more exposed. Interaction

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[23] Dana Evan Kaplan, "Conversion to Judaism in Nineteenth-Century America: Early American Religious Reform and Changing Attitudes to Proselytism, 1846-1865" (Paper delivered at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Meeting, Boston, 22 December 1997), 27. Kaplan has done other fascinating and pioneering work on this topic: "W.E. Todd's Attempt to Convert to Judaism and Study for the Reform Rabbinate in 1896," American Jewish History 83:4 (December 1995), 429-44; "Intermarriage and Conversion to Judaism in Early American Orthodoxy," Tradition 31:4 (Summer 1997), 39-51; "Conversion to Judaism: A Historical Perspective," Judaism 48:3 (Summer 1999), 259-74; "The Determination of Jewish Identity below the Mason-Dixon Line: Crossing the Boundary from Gentile to Jew in the Nineteenth-Century American South," Journal of Jewish Studies 52:1 (Spring 2001), 98-121. Re Walker-Mayer: Israelite 11:24 (December 9, 1864), 189. Re Nathans: Israelite 15:31 (February 5, 1869), 5.

with Gentiles was constant, in business, in neighborhoods, on the streets. The one synagogue symbolized the whole Jewish people; in the (frequent) absence of a rabbi, one or a few individuals represented Jewish interests publicly. The impact of each individual Jew was magnified.[24]

In the 1870s and 1880s, in the throes of the Gilded Age, social antisemitism, which had been fairly minor before the Civil War, began to increase noticeably. In the competitive postbellum American business culture, the ambivalent image of the economic Jew took on a new saliency to people who resented that culture (including WASP patricians, some agrarian radicals, and poor urban workers) and resented Jews for their association with it. Many German Jews had become quite well-to-do, acquiring the means for conspicuous consumption before they had fully acquired the niceties of Victorian America's "refined" manners. Some non-Jews, perhaps jealous of this rapid rise, began to articulate a stereotype of the aggressive, ignorant, and ill-mannered Jewish parvenu, a stereotype that "held up a distorted mirror to the immigrants' foreignness and cultural limitations and above all to their strong competitive drive and remarkable social mobility."[25]

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[24] See Robert Wiebe's description of small-town American culture in the 1870s, in The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 2-4. E.g., "People of very different backgrounds accommodated themselves to this Protestant code which had become so thoroughly identified with respectability, and the keepers of the national conscience applied its rules with slight margin for the deviant." Reform Judaism could be situated within that margin.

[25] Quote from Higham, "Social Discrimination," 10; also Send These to Me, 126. Also, John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 43 (1957), 559-78. For assessment of antebellum situation, see Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 11-13. For the change in the attitudes and responses of Boston Brahmins, see Barbara Solomon, Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). For the development of this idea of "manners" with respect to European Jewry, see John Murray Cuddihy, The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

The emergence of social discrimination against Jews based on status competition was not uniform throughout the United States, however, and the pattern had regional and local variations. "All the evidence for the period under review," Higham concludes, "agrees that [discrimination] generally affected small towns less than cities of perhaps 10,000 population or more; that it influenced the trans-Mississippi West less than the East or older Middle West; and that it touched the South least of all." One can theorize that in the Ohio River Valley, the residue of cultural southerness may have offset the influence of the "older Middle West." But it is clear that specific characteristics of each community were very important, and the most important was the stability or instability of the Jewish population, "the degree to which [its] growth . . . disturbed the existing social structures." Even in large cities, if the Jewish population grew only in proportion to the overall growth of the town, social structures could adapt.[26]

Most small towns of the Ohio River Valley, realizing by the late nineteenth century that their civic ambitions would be limited to, at best, regional prominence, did not attract new Jewish residents in numbers sufficient to upset the status quo. Small towns retained more social openness and were less competitive. The social discriminations that assaulted the moneyed Jewish aristocracy of the cities – restricted luxury hotels, restricted clubs, restricted elite private schools – were ones that would not often have been as relevant to small-town Jewish merchants. In a society where non-Jews could easily have face-to-face interactions with Jews, where social aspirations could

[26] Higham, "Social Discrimination," 24, 26; also discussed in Send These to Me, 141-147. Higham's prime example is San Francisco. Only the Upper Ohio Valley experienced a large increase in Jewish population in the late nineteenth century, but that was within the context of a greatly increased immigrant population altogether; this will be discussed in the next chapter.

only be modest, and where a reformed and respectable Judaism was part of the local landscape, the malevolent antisemitism of the Gilded Age seldom reared its head.

And where it did, Jews were eager to respond, as they had when expelled from Paducah in 1862. In fact, of the characteristics which Jonathan Sarna has identified as unique to American antisemitism, the reality that "[i]n America, Jews have always fought anti-Semites freely" tops the list. Nineteenth-century American Jews' lives did express a certain "doubleness." On the one hand, they were anxious to find the security of acceptance in American society; on the other hand, despite downplaying the traditional exclusivist Jewish notion of chosenness, they had a strong sense of Jewish identity and of participating in American society as both Americans **and** Jews. Hasia Diner sums up the ethos of the era: "On balance, the tone of nineteenth-century Jewish culture expressed a basic trust in the American system and its people, and took statements about goodwill and tolerance at face value. Because Jews believed in the American creed, they did not hesitate to draw attention to themselves as somehow different, yet at the same time entitled to equal access to the bounties of America."[27]

Among the small river towns of the Ohio Valley, mid-nineteenth century Marietta was unique for not having an organized German-Jewish community. From 1869, the Frank family, who also owned businesses in downriver Gallipolis, had a clothing store on lower Front Street. But the three other clothing stores listed in the 1873 city directory,

[27] Sarna, "Anti-Semitism and American History," 44; Diner, Time for Gathering, 229. The career of the concept of chosenness in American Jewish thinking is explored in Arnold M. Eisen's fascinating The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

and all of the dry goods stores, were owned by non-Jews; of the six merchant tailors listed, none was Jewish.[28]

In the 1870s and 1880s, a few more German Jewish families settled in Marietta. In 1875, the Hurwitzes came from Cincinnati to open a store selling liquor and cigars, and stayed about ten years. In 1882, Morris Luchs was sent to Marietta from Bellaire, Ohio, by his father Samuel to set up a branch of the family wholesale liquor business; in 1887 Samuel Sulzbacher came from Chillicothe, Ohio, and opened the Home Clothing House. Both Luchs and Sulzbacher were native-born sons of German immigrants, and their divergent stories illustrate aspects of American Jews' sameness and difference.[29]

Luchs' business was quite successful. Within a few years, the local Dun agency credit reporter affirmed that he was "of good capacity[,] char[acter] & habits"; his references included some of Marietta's leading (Protestant) businessmen. He was an active member of a local fraternal organization, the Improved Order of Red Men. Over the years, he moved his business twice to better quarters, farther away from the seedier part of town near the Ohio River. Despite the morally suspect nature of his trade, Luchs was quite respectable, and served on Marietta's Centennial Committee in 1888.[30]

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[28] Marietta City Directory for 1873-74: Ohio, Vol. 193, p. 236, and Vol. 194, p. 333, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS.

[29] Re Hurwitzes: Ohio census 1880: Ohio, Vol. 194, p. 318, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS. Re Luchs: Ohio, Vol. 194, p. 425. An extant business card for the Luchs establishment, which also did some retail liquor and tobacco trade, was brought to my attention by Jerry Devol of the Washington County (Ohio) Historical Society. Re Sulzbacher: The Marietta Register (September 16, 1887), 1.

One example of the convergence of German Jewish and German Christian culture was their readership of the German-language press. In Marietta, where the English-language newspapers refused to take ads for liquor stores and bars, Die Zeitung was the only print advertising outlet for Jewish (and other) liquor merchants such as Morris Luchs.

[30] Ohio, Vol. 194, p. 425 and 496, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS. Various pamphlets and clippings about Luchs' embarrassingly-named fraternal group supplied by Jerry Devol of the Washington County (Ohio) Historical Society.

In 1884, Morris' older brother Louis joined him in Marietta. At first he was also in the family business, but moved in a more creative direction. In 1900, he was manager of the Opera House and by 1905 he was manager of the municipal auditorium, a 1000-seat hall on the second floor of City Hall. His obituary claimed that his City Auditorium was "one of the well-known show houses in the upper Ohio Valley."[31]

Sulzbacher had opened his store with an advertisement proclaiming, "Why the Home? Because we propose to make our home among you, and make your homes happier by furnishing you good, reliable goods at *fair* prices." He threw himself into civic affairs, serving on the Finance Committee of the city's Centennial Committee in 1888. He sponsored a square in the centennial quilt, using the space to advertise his promise of a "square deal." He evidently prospered: in early 1888, a credit report noted that he was "doing a good business." An 1891 county history reported that the Home's merchant tailoring department ("the crowning glory of this house") employed "fifteen good practical assistants."[32]

Sulzbacher and the Luchs brothers came to Marietta at a time of rapid local population growth, spurred by a regional oil boom in western Pennsylvania, southeastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia. Between 1870 and 1900, though Washington County overall experienced less growth than other neighboring counties (19%), the city of Marietta experienced a great deal more – a full 156%. Urbanization challenged the mid-

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[31] Marietta Times (October 9, 1923), 5.

[32] Marietta Register (September 16, 1887), 1; Ohio, Vol. 98, p. 170, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, HBS; L.G. Austin, comp., Illustrated History and Business Review of Washington County, Ohio, for the Year 1891 (Coshocton, Ohio: Union Publishing Co., 1891).

century cultural status quo, and in this turbulent milieu, antisemitism – the negative side of the ambivalent Jewish economic image – made an appearance.

It will probably never be possible to determine exactly what was done to Sam Sulzbacher, but he fought back most overtly. In July 1888, an advertisement, reproduced on the next page, appeared in both the Marietta Times and the Weekly Leader.[33]

With this aggressive, sarcastic, and humorous advertisement, Sulzbacher takes the negative image promoted by the antisemites and turns it back around into a promotion for the positive image. He must have enjoyed exposing them and then tweaking their noses about his business expertise, saying, in effect, "Not only am I not going to let you call me names, but I am going to show you that I'm a better businessman too!" It is a perfect example of Diner's observation: not hesitating to call attention to himself as different, and also entitled to the opportunity to partake of America's bounty.

It is possible that this remarkable ad is evidence of a larger conflict between Sulzbacher and his competitors, or of anti-foreign and anti-commercial sentiment generally. It is possible that this was a continuing conflict that eventually made him feel unwelcome in Marietta. If so, it took ten years. Sulzbacher left Marietta in 1897 or 1898, just as the town was finishing its decade of greatest growth ever.[34]

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[33] Marietta Times, July 19, 1888; Weekly Leader, July 17, 1888.

[34] It is quite possible that it was linked to his involvement in controversies surrounding the city centennial celebrations. There was friction between those (mostly Anglo-Saxon descendants of early settlers who were the cultural elite) who insisted on an historically-oriented celebration on the city's traditional "birthday" of April 7, and those (mostly businessmen) who wanted a larger, more commercialized celebration during the summer months. The leader of the former group, Douglas Putnam, suggested that "possibly a large majority of our modern population, either home or foreign born, will not be satisfied with a tame historical celebration. They know little of pioneers, pioneer history and pioneer families. Yet their attention had been called and their aid solicited [by the business group] toward a celebration on a broader scale and of a more spectacular character than is, perhaps, consistent with a 7th of April commemoration. And they have **from various motives** [emphasis added] responded with a liberality and enthusiasm which [Putnam is being conciliatory here] deserves recognition." Two celebrations were held, one in July with fireworks and one on April 7 that was "no doubt the most intellectual." The controversy was indicative of



several enthusiastic Boston gentlemen have invented a method for using the surplus in the United States treasury. They propose to abolish usury or interest by having the government establish depositories of money at all necessary points, to loan money without interest to all persons who can give security.

Church, of Barlow, will meet at Mrs. Kate Brackenridge's Saturday, July 28th, afternoon and evening. You are invited.

—W. G. Walfaco and wife, John M. Doane and wife, B. L. Wydman and sisters are at Waters' house. The gentlemen are all members of the State Reception Committee.

—or—

J. A. Plumer

TO SAVE

My HONORED competitors the trouble they have been at, I wish to announce the fact that my Parent Brothers and Sisters are JEWS, that I am a JEW and am proud of it. In addition I am a GENTLE MAN, and do no underhanded TRICKS in order to injure my CHRISTIAN competitors. My name is Sar Sulzbacher and I am sole owner of

The Home Clothing House!

Next door below the St. Cloud Hotel, where I am doing a straightforward, honest business and makin friends every day. If you want to see a real live Jew with horns and hoofs and pointed teeth, and good stock of

CLOTHING,

For Men, Boys and Children, HATS, SHIRTS, UNDERWEAR, COLLARS, CUFFS, SOCKS NECKTIES, TRUNKS & BAGS, in all grades and honestly priced, call on

SAM SULZBACHER, The Jew.

Next door below the St. Cloud Hotel.

continuing ambivalence within Marietta about the pace and direction of change. For complete story, see Andrew R.L. Cayton and Paula R. Riggs, City Into Town: The City of Marietta, Ohio, 1788-1988 (Marietta: Dawes Memorial Library, 1991), 161-75.

And at the same time, other Jews were integrated into the local scene. Morris and Louis Luchs might have had an easier time since both men were married to non-Jewish women. But Marietta Jews seemed to be accepted as part of the urban landscape, and both Gentiles and Jews moved in and out of Gentile and Jewish circles. In the 1890s, Jews continued to move into Marietta. Peretz Fragner opened a liquor store on Luchs' former premises at 130 Front St. in the early 1890s. As a play on his Hebrew name – and perhaps as a nod to the stereotyping of his business – Fragner anglicized his first name to "Patrick" and billed himself as "Patsey." Samuel Wallach owned several businesses, including a furniture store. About 1896, a young Cincinnatian named Joseph Josephy opened a large clothing store, The Buckeye. Morris Miller and Peter Unger operated junkyards, important peripheral businesses to the oil and gas industry.[35]

Marietta Jews bonded socially as an ethnic group. Luchs' intermarriage (and that of Patsey Fragner) were not obstacles to this solidarity; intermarriage was not in and of itself assimilation and abandonment. In March 1898 this group came together to celebrate the wedding of an East European couple who had recently arrived in Marietta. The wedding was the subject of breathless curiosity – and of much confusion – in the local papers. "In all the hundred and ten years of Marietta's history there has never been performed here a wedding ceremony according to the Hebrew rites," The Register pronounced – perhaps inaccurately. "But at half-past five o'clock, to-night, there will be such a ceremony." The groom was Israel Evin (he used the English name Edward), a 24-year-old shoemaker, who had moved to Marietta the previous year. The bride was 19-

[35] Photocopy of statement from Patsey Fragner's Wines and Liquors, dated Nov. 20, 1894, supplied by Jerry Devol. 130 Front Street has kept up its reputation, being for the last 60 or 70 years home to Judd's Bar, a popular Marietta "dive." As of 1890, Luchs' shop was the only liquor store in town (Marietta City Directory, 1890).

year-old Rumanian-born Yetta Feicke, whose sister and brother-in-law, Nathan and Jenny Newman, lived in Marietta. Both were relatively recent immigrants.[36]

The ceremony took place at the Newman's home, which was also the location of Nathan's tailoring business. The local German-language newspaper, Die Zeitung, had a two-paragraph article, but both English-language papers described at some length Jewish wedding customs – or in any event, their understanding of them. The Times reporter seemed most intrigued by the sight of "the Rabbi, groom and other gentlemen with their hats on." Even the spelling of the name of the officiating rabbi is lost in confusion. The Register claimed that he was "the Rabbi of the Marieta [sic] congregation, called the Congregation of Peace"; the Times said he was from New York.[37]

Other members of the Marietta Jewish community may also have been relatives of the couple; the wedding party included Mr. and Mrs. Morris Feicke (cousins to the bride), Mr. and Mrs. Peter Unger and their daughter Fannie, who served as bridesmaid. Guests also came from Bellaire and Parkersburg. At the supper following the ceremony, toasts were given by both Jewish guests (including Marcus Unger, Peter Unger, Morris Luchs and "Patsey" Fragner) and non-Jewish guests (including E. S. Alderman, with whom Joseph Josephy boarded). The Times reporter was also invited to make a toast, and quite joined in the jollity of the occasion. He seems to have been a special friend of Fragner,

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[36] Marietta Register (March 3, 1898), 7. This is probably correct. In 1854, Charles Coblenz's daughter Julia married Jacob Jacobs in a ceremony conducted by a justice of the peace. In 1877, Henry Friedlander married Johanna Hurwitz (mother of Harry), also in a civil ceremony.

[37] Marietta Register (March 3, 1898), 7; Marietta Times (March 9, 1898), 1. Die Zeitung ([March 10, 1898], 1) does not mention a congregation either. The American Israelite (44:38 [March 17, 1898], 6) was confused by this information when they picked it up from the Register. "We believe this is the first time this congregation has been heard from," they noted. "We do not remember ever before hearing that there were any Jews in Marietta much less that they had a congregation, and a rabbi, and we never saw Marietta on a charity subscription list. Let us hope for better things in the [f]uture." The Times gives the rabbi's name as "Terscheid" and the Register as "Kirschwell." Die Zeitung gives the rabbi's name as Abraham Hirschwell, and does not mention a congregation. The marriage license says "Tieschwell."

getting in several digs at his expense, for instance, that "Mr. P. Fragner made at least sixteen speeches and was always applauded – when he sat down." The reporter continued, "One of the very pleasant features of the evening was the singing in Hebrew, German and English which was led by Mr. [Morris] Miller . . . . The festivities were closed with dancing. There was no Miriam with a timbrel but some sons of Ham [!], with more modern instruments, made the music. We are notified that there will soon be another Hebrew wedding and are sure it will mean another 'hot time in the old town.'"[38]

It was a diverse group of Jews that gathered in 1898 at the Newman house. Some, such as Joseph and Lena Josephy, were native-born Americans. Morris Miller, was Russian-born, as were his wife and their children. Peter Unger, Patsey Fragner, and a number of others had been born in parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; though Patsey Fragner had come to the U.S. in 1866, most of them had immigrated in the 1880s.[39] The "Austrians" were almost certainly not from present-day Austria, but rather from the province of Galicia. A province of medieval Poland, Galicia was annexed by Austria-Hungary during the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century. Between 1881 and 1910, over a quarter-million Jews from the Empire immigrated to the United States; 85% of them came from Galicia.[40]

Another group of Marietta Jews, who started to arrive in town in the 1890s, were also from Eastern Europe, but from farther north in the region of Tsarist Russian that is now Latvia. They hailed from a small town near Plavinas, southeast of Riga, not far

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[38] Marietta Times (March 9, 1898), 1.

[39] Ohio census 1900.

[40] Arieh Tartakower, "Jewish Migratory Movements in Austria in Recent Generations," in Josef Fraenkel, ed., The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History, and Destruction (London: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1967), 285-310. The region of Galicia is now split between western Poland and eastern Ukraine.

north of Lithuania, a town that by the end of the nineteenth century was close to half Jewish. In their case, the pioneer of the chain migration seems to have been Dave Rabinovitz, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1891 and was settled in Pittsburgh by the United Hebrew Charities of New York.[41] By 1910, about two dozen families, most of them part of a large extended family group, had settled in the city.

This new East European element represented in Marietta the appearance of a new immigrant phenomenon that by 1898 was transforming American Jewry. The coincidence of East European immigration with new economic opportunities in Marietta and other small Ohio River towns would be a challenge – and sometimes a boon – to these towns and their Jewish communities.

[41] Dave Rabinovitz to David M. Bressler, 21 January 1910 (Travelling Agents, Ohio file, Industrial Removal Office papers, American Jewish Historical Society). Re Plavinas: Pinkas ha-kehilot: entsiklopedyah shel ha-yishuvim ha-Yehudim le-min hivasdam ve-ad le-ahar Sho'at Milhemet ha'Olam ha-Shenivah [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad va-Shem, 1969-96), v. 6: 75.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE EAST EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF COMMUNITY

Between 1871 and 1880, some 15,000 Jews immigrated to the United States, about 1,500 per year, constituting about one-half of one percent of all immigrants. In the following four years, 1881-1884, Jewish immigration was almost 75,000 persons, an average of over 18,000 per year, and constituting 3% of all immigration to the United States. It continued to surge, cresting at 154,000 – 14% of all immigration – in 1906. The flood was precipitated by a sudden and violent increase in antisemitism in the Russian Empire, reflecting wrenching economic dislocations and the conflicts accompanying the rise of revolutionary politics. Russian Jews had always suffered residential and occupational restrictions, but the so-called "May Laws" of 1882, instituted in the wake of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, even more severely restricted rights of residence and access to schools and professions. The tsarist government sanctioned – even encouraged – physical violence against Jewish persons

and property; pogroms (the Russian word means "devastation") became widespread, frequent, and vicious. Some Russian Jews responded by committing themselves to revolutionary politics. Others, inspired by Zionism, moved to Palestine to begin to rebuild the Jewish national homeland. Many chose a route of greater economic promise: immigration to America.[1]

The memory of the East European experience tends to dominate contemporary American Jewish life – not surprisingly. Since roughly two million East European Jews arrived in the U.S. between 1880 and 1920, the present-day Jewish community is dominated by their descendants. Indeed, with this immigration augmenting an existing American Jewish population one-tenth its size, Gerald Sorin suggests that "[i]t is at least arguable that, without the eastern European Jews, a viable Jewish culture in America would have ultimately disappeared." Certainly the East European immigration secured the survival of many small Ohio River Jewish communities well into the twentieth century. But the experiences of these communities were influenced by conditions specific to the Ohio River small towns.[2]

A critical factor in local variations was the direction, as much as it was the size, of the new immigration. By the late nineteenth century, America's industrial cities were the site for economic mobility; country peddling and small-town merchandising no longer offered much promise. And in America's cities, Jews were but one of a wide diversity of

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[1] For immigration statistics, see Gerald Sorin, Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 54. He also has a good chapter on the background to emigration (34-60). Basic works on this immigration era include John Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) and Walter Nugent, Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[2] Gerald Sorin, A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 11.

immigrant ethnic groups. The implications for institution- and community-building and for the process of acculturation are obvious: cities attracted Jews because the new arrivals, even the unskilled, could best hope to earn a living there and because there they could adapt to American life within a familiar religious and ethnic context.[3]

Some segments of the Ohio River Valley, especially the upper valley close to Pittsburgh, did experience Jewish population growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as an economic revival created by industrialization coincided with mass immigration. The Ohio River was important to industrialization, providing an option for transporting coal, steel, and other products. As Pittsburgh's hinterland developed, some East European immigrants moved to the small river towns, establishing new Jewish communities and institutions.[4]

Few of the Ohio River towns south of Wheeling received substantial East European Jewish immigration. But even in these, some opportunities existed, and some East Europeans took advantage of them. This migration replenished Jewish populations, though in many towns only at replacement level. In a case study of Paducah, Owensboro

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[3] Lee Shai Weissbach demonstrates in the case of Kentucky how the Jewish populations of cities benefited more from the East European migration than did small towns. More than half of the post-1880 Jewish immigrants in Kentucky settled in Louisville, which developed a diverse panoply of Jewish institutions, including day schools, a hospital, vocational service, Jewish Community Center, Federation, country club, and senior citizen housing ("Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective: The Era of Mass Migration," Filson Club History Quarterly 69:3 [July 1995], 255-74). Relative to other cities, Jewish population in Louisville has been remarkably persistent. A study of early twentieth-century Jewish and Italian immigrants in Louisville uncovered high rates of persistence in both ethnic communities (Gregory Kent Stanley, "Making a Home: Italians and Jews in Louisville," Filson Club History Quarterly 68:1 [January 1994], 35-56). German Jewish families also stayed: the membership of Temple Adath Israel in 1977 still included descendants of more than a third (38%) of the original members of 1842 (Herman Landau, Adath Louisville: The Story of a Jewish Community [Louisville: privately published, 1981], 254).

[4] Lee Shai Weissbach has surveyed small Jewish communities nationwide that failed to develop even in the era of mass Jewish immigration ("Decline in an Age of Expansion: Disappearing Jewish Communities in the Era of Mass Migration," American Jewish Archives 49:1-2 [1997], 39-61). He includes Madison, Ind., Cairo, Ill., and Owensboro, Ky. in this study.

and Lexington, Kentucky. Lee Shai Weissbach discovered that "[w]hile there were prominent Jewish individuals and kin networks that remained influential over long periods of time . . ., the Jewish population in each of these communities as a whole was in a constant state of flux" during the era of mass migration. The same held true in other Ohio River towns, for instance, Gallipolis and Ironton, Ohio. This dynamic enabled Jewish communities to survive well into the twentieth century.[5]

The integration of the new immigrants was a challenge for all existing American Jewish communities. Notes Hasia Diner, "The usual telling of the story [of the East European immigration] . . . pitted the new Jewish immigrants against the Jews of America, the 'German' Jews, by then comfortable, Reform, and put out by two million immigrants, many poor, all alien." But, she continues, "the post-1880 immigrants differed less from those of the half-century earlier than the mythology has assumed." In terms of motives for migration, cultural background, and desires for sustained Jewish identification, the East Europeans' experience was "less of a watershed . . . than an intensification of forces set loose well before . . . . [i]t is much more accurate to . . . consider the immigration from the 1820s through the 1920s as a single movement that began in western Europe and moved gradually and unevenly to the east."[6]

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[5] Re Kentucky: Weissbach, "Stability and Mobility in the Small Jewish Community: Examples from Kentucky History," American Jewish History 79:3 (Spring 1990), 371. Re Ironton: Eugene B. Willard, et al. A Standard History of the Hanging Rock Iron Region of Ohio (n.p.: Lewis Publishing Co., 1916), 775; Phil Thuma, Lawrence County Genealogical Society, personal correspondence with author, July 3, 1994; Marty Weill, personal correspondence with author, June 19, 1994. The 1918-1919 American Jewish Yearbook reported ninety Jewish individuals in Ironton; this is too high (American Jewish Year Book 5679 [1918-1919] [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1918], 62).

[6] Hasia Diner, A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 231-35.

However great the similarities between the "German" migration and that of the East Europeans may appear from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, at the time it was the differences that loomed large. The America into which the East Europeans poured was vastly different from the America that had greeted the Germans, and the Germans' decades-long experience adapting to a changing American scene put them at a distance from their East European cousins. In many cities, economic and social class disparities were reflected in residential patterns. In Louisville, the German Jews "concentrated in comfortable neighborhoods south of Broadway" and the East Europeans in a "highly cohesive downtown neighborhood, centered on Preston Street, which some referred to as a *shtetl*." Pittsburgh's older Jewish neighborhood, the Hill District, became at the turn of the century increasingly poor; wealthier Jews, such as the Kaufmans of department store fame, were now in Squirrel Hill.[7]

Despite the disparities, there was a recognition of a deep connection, and affluent German Jews spared no effort to provide social services for the immigrants. In Pittsburgh, for example, the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1883 opened a homeless shelter for Jews; the Society was supported solely by members of the ultra-reform Rodef Shalom and the moderately-reform Tree of Life. In Cincinnati, German Jews founded a Charity School, the Society for the Relief of the Sick Poor, and the Jewish Foster Home, among other institutions, in the 1880s and 1890s. Even as the East Europeans established

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[7] Weissbach, "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective," 263; Jacob Feldman, The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History, 1755-1945 (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986), 180-86. An excellent discussion of German-Russian tensions is Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

their own self-help institutions, the stigma of being "projects" of the wealthier Germans was a source of resentment for many decades to come.[8]

Beyond their economic integration and social acculturation, the Germans practiced an American Judaism that was barely recognizable to the immigrants. In the Russian Empire, economic, social, demographic and political circumstances all conspired to thwart the development of Western-European style religious reform. Although significant numbers of Russian Jews (both in the cities and the villages) were not religiously observant, the religion that they did **not** practice was traditional Talmudic Judaism. The German-American Jews, on the other hand, were moving beyond the balanced synthesis of the 1870s into the radicalism of the 1880s. Writes Michael Meyer, "The last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth witnessed the widest swing of the Reform pendulum away from traditional Jewish belief."[9]

This radical ideology, known as Classical Reform, was articulated in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 by a group of younger rabbis dominated by Kaufman Kohler, son-in-law and spiritual heir of David Einhorn. The platform's eight planks codified a universalist, rationalist, and spiritualized position; it rejected *kashrut* and other traditional practices and declared that Jews are "no longer a nation, but [only] a religious community." Taking a broad and generous view of other religions and of the human

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[8] Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 143; Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, The Jews of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience/HUC-JIR, 1989), 64-66.

[9] Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 264. For the synthesis of the 1870s, see end of Part II, Chapter 6, above.

capacity for reason and progress, the rabbis reinterpreted the ancient concept of Messiah as an ideal of social justice for all humankind.[10]

This Reform was very different from that which Isaac Mayer Wise had promulgated to the small towns in the mid-nineteenth century, but as those communities participated in the organized Reform movement, they were able to assimilate the changes. In Portsmouth, Ohio, for instance, B'nai Abraham maintained a firm Reform orientation and UAHC loyalty. In 1895, the board voted unanimously to recommend the adoption of the newly-published Classical Reform Union Prayer Book, a largely English-language liturgy, which emphasized ethical principles and abbreviated important sections of the traditional liturgy (including the Torah and Prophetical readings) and omitted others entirely. The members of B'nai Abraham's board were businessmen, not philosophers, but the optimistic and progressive tone of the new Reform no doubt appealed to them. "Reform" was now an integral part of their identity as Jews, so they responded to acting Rabbi Abraham Schapiro's assertion that it "is almost a necessity to adopt the new Union prayer books as nearly all reformed congregations are using them."[11]

With the UAHC's move to the left and the appearance on the right of a multitude of traditional congregations reflecting the regional and religious diversity of the immigrants, American Jewry's religious landscape was drastically altered. In Pittsburgh, for example, there were new Orthodox congregations for Jews from Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Galicia, and Rumania. In Cincinnati, which already had two Orthodox synagogues founded in the mid-nineteenth century (one German, one Polish), Orthodox

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[10] The complete text appears in Meyer, Response to Modernity, 387-88.

[11] Portsmouth – Congregation Bene Abraham minute book (AJA), May 26 and June 30, 1895.

congregations multiplied. Four new Orthodox congregations were established in Louisville in the 1880s and 1890s. The UAHC, which had once aspired to unite all American Jews, by 1907 represented less than 10% of the estimated 1,700 congregations in the United States.[12]

The arrival of East Europeans changed small-town Jewish life as well. In many towns, the East Europeans stayed somewhat separate from older German Jewish residents, for instance, forming their own Orthodox congregations. In others, the older Germans brought them into the Reform fold. In some towns, Jewish institutions appeared for the first time in the mass migration era. What happened in Ohio River Valley towns varied greatly depending on the extent of East European immigration and the existing situation of the local Jewish population.

In the regional cities of Wheeling and Evansville, where Jewish population would reach 1000 in the early twentieth century, Jewish communal development followed the pattern of the largest regional cities of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville. An Orthodox-Reform split also affected the smaller, but more recently-organized communities in the West Virginia towns of Huntington and Parkersburg.

As a result of earlier conflicts, Evansville already by 1870 had two congregations, one Reform (B'nai Israel) and one Orthodox (B'nai Moshe). B'nai Moshe was small but committed; in 1880, there were only 25 member families, but they had a small synagogue and a Hebrew day school for 20 pupils, taught by their full-time rabbi. As more East

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[12] Re Pittsburgh: Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 68-88. Re Cincinnati: Sarna and Klein, Jews of Cincinnati, 79. Re Louisville: Weissbach, "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective," 264. Re UAHC: Meyer, Response to Modernity, 292.

Europeans moved to Evansville, the congregation grew to about 50 families before 1900.[13]

The economic and social gap between Reform and Orthodox began to widen. B'nai Israel members made their livings from banking, law, manufacturing, and industry. B'nai Moshe members were small-scale merchants, such as pawnbrokers and dealers in second-hand goods. A county history from 1897 noted that B'nai Israel "numbers among its members some of the wealthiest and most prominent business men in the city." In fact, all of the prominent Jewish citizens listed in the history were German Jews – and all were members of B'nai Israel. At the turn of the century, the two synagogues were only about a block apart in a neighborhood just northwest of the commercial center, though the Orthodox Jews tended to live close to downtown, while the Reform Jews lived farther away, in residential neighborhoods. In 1902, B'nai Israel erected a new building, closer to the members' neighborhood.[14]

Evansville's German Jews were quickly outnumbered. In 1907, community leaders estimated that the city's Jewish population of 850 was 75% German and 25% Russian; by 1912, the breakdown of the 1000 Jews was "German and Russian in equal parts." The two groups of Jews usually moved in separate circles. Reminiscing in the 1980s about his childhood in the 1910s, one Evansville native from a German family commented that the East Europeans "certainly didn't have association with the part of the Jewish community that we associated with . . . . There was very little traffic between the

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[13] Joseph P. Elliott, A History of Evansville and Vanderburgh County, Indiana (Evansville: Keller Printing, 1897), 275; History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana (Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889), 304.

[14] Elliott, History of Evansville (1897) 275; "100th Anniversary, Washington Avenue Temple, 1859-1957, Congregation B'nai Israel, Evansville, Indiana," Nearprint File – Geography, AJA.

two [groups]. It was snobbery of an extraordinary kind. . . . [W]hen we grew up my sister picked up a Yiddish phrase or two and my father forbad[e] her ever to use them. It was strict by order that no one in the family ever use Yiddish expressions. It was below us. It was demeaning to do that."[15]

Germans and East Europeans also remained separate in Wheeling, West Virginia. The German Jewish community there was solidly middle-class by the 1890s, still concentrated in the traditionally Jewish clothing and dry goods businesses, and closely knit through business and marriage relationships. Their congregation, Leshem Shomayim, with about 100 members, continued to be in the forefront of radical reform, adopting a markedly Protestantized liturgical style. Having used the Einhorn prayerbook for years, Leshem Shomayim adopted the Union Prayer Book with alacrity. And in April 1892, the congregation completed and dedicated a new Moorish-style synagogue on Eoff Street.[16]

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[15] Town Data card – Evansville, 1907, Box 123, and Town Data report – Evansville, 1912, Box 83, Industrial Removal Office papers, AJHS. The American Jewish Yearbook 1914-1915 (5675) ([Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1914], 363) also reported a Jewish population of 1000 and in the 1918-1919 edition (50) reported a population of 1500. At this point, Evansville had grown into a community beyond the scope of this study. Personal recollection: William Gumberts, interview with Darrel Bigham, 1982 (University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives), 3, 11-12. There were also difficulties within the Orthodox community, between the older German members and the newer East Europeans, and sometime around the turn of the century, the latter founded their own congregation, Adath Israel.

[16] "Merchants of Wheeling, West Virginia, June 1891," SC-12959, AJA. See Part II, Chapter 4 above re Wheeling's early involvement with radicalism. The Union Prayer Book replaced Minhag America in Reform congregations. "Einhorn's prayerbook [Olat Tamid] better fit the mood and theology of Reform Judaism in its classical phase. Yet for the CCAR simply to adopt Olat Tamid would have been too painful an affront to its own president [i.e., Wise]" (Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity, 279). The compromise was the new work, which was in the Einhornian theological tradition, something with which Leshem Shomayim would have been quite at home. Services at Leshem Shomayim continued to be read in German for some time, though it is not clear until when. In 1877, the congregation began keeping records in English, and decided, in the process of revising its constitution and bylaws, also to translate them into English (Rabbi Harry Levi, "A Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim" [Wheeling: Bullard Printing House, 1899], 17-18, 20-22).

Before the 1890s, there had been a few non-German Jews in the community, though they were not very visible. Soon Wheeling was the pre-eminent industrial town in West Virginia, part of a major industrial region surrounding Pittsburgh, and the combination of industrialization and immigration increased the city's ethnic diversity. By 1906, approximately 20% of the now 500 Jews in Wheeling were East European immigrants and both the number and the proportion were growing steadily. Leshem Shomayim responded as did other German communities, organizing social services for "the poor, forlorn, homeless creatures . . . these unfortunate co-religionists." Responsibilities for social welfare were divided between the existing Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, which attended to impoverished Jewish residents, and a new Relief Society, which provided for transients.[17]

The East Europeans quickly developed their own religious and cultural life. Some of the immigrants became small merchants and others peddled junk; many of them were cigar-makers who had learned the trade in Pittsburgh. The large number of single men employed as stogie makers supported the existence of several kosher restaurants. Orthodox Congregation Ohev Sholem was organized around 1914, meeting in various rented locations in downtown Wheeling where most of the 50 or so members lived. By

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[17] One East European was Meyer Morris, who immigrated from his native Lithuania in the early 1870s when in his late teens. After a few years peddling in the vicinity of Wheeling, he settled in Pittsburgh, where he found *landsmen* and institutions in which he could have felt more comfortable than in the German-dominated Jewish community of Wheeling (Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958 [n.p., 1963], 1567). Meyer Morris was Shinedling's maternal grandfather. For development of Wheeling: Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, West Virginia: A History (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 199, 204. Population data: Town Data report – Wheeling, 1906, Box 123, IRO papers. Shinedling (West Virginia Jewry, 1319) gives 400 population for 1905 and 500 for 1912. Re immigrants: Levi, "A Brief History of Congregation Leshem Shomayim," 23.

1920, the Jewish population of Wheeling had grown to around 1000, largely from the influx of East European immigrants.[18]

In two other West Virginia industrial towns, the new immigration also created divided communities. In Parkersburg, where a congregation was finally organized only in 1909, after fifty years of Jewish settlement, the addition of East Europeans accelerated its almost immediate break-up into Reform and Orthodox factions. In Huntington, because of the newness of the city, German Jewish hegemony did not last very long. Tensions over the direction of Congregation Ohev Sholom seem to have appeared as early as the 1880s; the congregation used the Union Prayer Book after its publication in 1896, but made Orthodox services available for the High Holidays. Around 1910, with at least 100 Jewish residents in the city, and a much greater diversity of backgrounds, the traditionalists, including many recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, founded Orthodox congregation B'nai Israel, which soon erected its own synagogue, employed its own fulltime rabbi and a schochet, and established its own cemetery. [19]

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[18] Town Data card – Wheeling, 1909, Box 123, IRO papers. Re Ohev Sholem: "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling, prepared by L. Good, 1989," SC-12958, AJA; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1492-95. The first location was on Market Street, around the corner from Levy's Restaurant on Eleventh Street. Jacob Perlman, the rabbi from 1921-1935, had been in Marietta around 1905. He taught a daily afternoon Hebrew school and ran a kosher butcher shop near the Marsh Stogie factory. Re population growth: American Jewish Year Book 1918-1919, 344. For a general view of and Jewish involvement in cigar manufacturing, see Patricia Cooper, Once A Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

There was also a small Jewish community in Moundsville, West Virginia, about a dozen miles downriver from Wheeling, which started a small Orthodox congregation in 1909 (Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 52, 57, 61, 1082, 1357).

[19] Constitution and By-Laws of the B'nai Israel Congregation, Huntington, W. Va., 1946, AJA; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 875, 883, 961. Ohev Sholom did not join the UAHC until 1935. Shinedling quotes one observer who suggested that only then could they "safely 'join the Union' without arousing too much ill will and disfavor on the part of the Orthodox membership" (894). It is unclear why this would have been the case, since by then there was an Orthodox option in town. Perhaps some people maintained memberships in both, for historical reasons or for the sake of communal unity, and (until the Orthodox community was firmly established) the radical step of formally affiliating with the very liberal UAHC was too alienating.

It is not apparent that intra-communal differences were deep or serious in Parkersburg or Huntington. Perhaps because these two towns did not have long histories of institutional unity, separation by religious preference was easier. Reform and Orthodox Jews mingled at B'nai B'rith and other community-wide meetings, and in Huntington, children from the Reform congregation attended the afternoon Hebrew school run by the Orthodox.[20]

In some small towns, the Jewish community managed not to fragment. Newcomers were folded into the existing communal and social structure, though not always with the greatest of ease. In late-nineteenth-century Paducah, Kentucky, Jewish population barely increased despite modest but steady increases in the town's total population. East European immigrants in Paducah who desired communal affiliation joined the German-dominated Reform congregation, but there was always a certain social distance. For example, the local federation was organized in 1917 mainly by German Jews in order to assist new East European immigrants.[21]

The newcomers were a particular challenge for small, but well-established Jewish communities such as Portsmouth. Though their numbers were never large, the Portsmouth community was by the turn of the century a stable and prosperous group. In 1906, the congregation had purchased the building in which it had rented space for many years; it then re-sold the building, bought a lot at Eighth and Gay Streets, and dedicated

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[20] Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 876, 963-64, 918.

[21] General population grew from 4,500 in 1860 to 19,000 in 1900, but Jewish population grew from about 200 in 1870 to only about 250 in 1900. Weissbach, "Stability and Mobility in the Small Jewish Community," 357-58, 363, 372; and "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective," 267.

the cornerstone of a new temple in 1923. In large part, the new temple was possible because of the community's affluence. A lead gift came from congregation president Simon Labold, a native-born son of Bavarian Jewish immigrants, who came to Portsmouth from Cincinnati in the 1880s. By the 1910s, Labold, president of the First National Bank, was able to pledge the phenomenal sum of $10,000 to the congregation's building fund [22]

The move was also made possible – and necessary – by a surge in membership. As late as 1896, the congregation had only 37 individual members, representing even fewer families; in 1926, there were 81, with two dozen children in the Sunday school. This growth was fueled by the settlement in Portsmouth of East European Jews. To the older German Jewish population – the Lehmans, Mayers, Wises – were now added East European families like the Kotovskys, Wingards, Goldsteins, Kratzes, Horchows and Atlases.[23]

Initially, the economic differences were considerable. The Germans were almost exclusively merchants, but many East Europeans were workers, for instance, the foreman of the Portsmouth Shoe Company. Those East Europeans who were merchants had smaller, less prestigious establishments like pawnshops or junk yards. At first, relations were a little cool. When Joseph Lopinsky, an East European, applied for congregational membership in 1894, several men objected that he had not been in town long enough –

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[22] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, January 6, February 16, and April 8, 1906, and October 5, 1919; "Congregation Beneh Abraham 100th Anniversary, 1858-1958," AJA. The Portsmouth Jews' affluence was quite evident to the IRO's traveling agent (Henry Goldstein to David Bressler, May 19, 1908, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers).

[23] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, October 6, 1893; March 31 and May 26, 1895; January 26, August 2, and September 20, 1896; February 5, 1926. Also, Louise Kline, interview with author, April 1995. The American Jewish Yearbook 1918-19 (53) listed Portsmouth's total Jewish population as 128.

almost certainly a cover for hesitation about this particular individual, since length of residence had never before been a problem. Hedging their bets, the congregational board accepted Lopinsky provisionally while amending the bylaws to provide for a committee to investigate "the character and qualification of the applicant." The board accepted Lopinsky into full membership the next month.[24]

Differences of background were compounded by the close-knit nature of the Portsmouth community. Small town societies may often be cool to outsiders, but once one becomes an insider, these societies are usually reliably loyal. And since in a small community, the disadvantages of exclusivity far outweigh the challenges of inclusivity, those newcomers who could adapt generally had little difficulty being accepted by the older German families. Despite their initial uncertainties, Jews of different backgrounds decided they could not afford to perpetuate intra-Jewish cultural conflict. The older German families maintained a strong hand in communal affairs, but East Europeans eventually rose to leadership; though unused to Reform, most were eager to benefit from the social stability and prestige B'nai Abraham carried in Portsmouth. Thus the Portsmouth Jewish community was able successfully to absorb the East Europeans into the existing social and institutional structure.[25]

That said, it was still easier for some recent immigrants than for others. Henry Atlas is one example. Born in Hungary, Atlas emigrated as a teenager in 1880 and opened his first store in Portsmouth in 1895. He quickly prospered. In addition to the

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[24] Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, August 12 and September 16, 1894. The factory foreman is mentioned in a letter from Henry Goldstein to David Bressler, May 19, 1908 (Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers); he was probably one member of the Cohen family who lived at 330 East 10th St. (R.L. Polk & Co.'s Portsmouth Directory 1908-9 [Columbus: R.L. Polk, 1908]).

[25] Bernard Levi, interview with author, August 21, 1994.

synagogue and B'nai B'rith. Atlas joined the Masons and the Elks. He shared the values and goals of his new community and they in turn opened up to him: one of the Atlas daughters married a member of the Levi family, who had been in Portsmouth since the 1850s. Featured in a 1924 Portsmouth Times series of "Men Who Helped Make Portsmouth," Atlas observed that when he came to Portsmouth, it was a "conservative little town, and the stranger was regarded with suspicion. Now that attitude has changed." Atlas was part of the change, joining his formerly suspicious neighbors in the local booster culture of the 1920s.[26]

Another success story was Samuel Horchow. Born in the town of Brody in Polish Galicia, Horchow came to the United States in 1891. Two years later he opened his furniture store in Portsmouth. Like Atlas, he was a club man, belonging to the Masons, Elks, Knights of Pythias, and Modern Woodmen, in addition to B'nai B'rith – and of course Congregation B'nai Abraham. He was a booster: member of the Chamber of Commerce and president of the Bureau of Community Service.[27]

Atlas' and Horchow's acceptance was facilitated by their backgrounds in areas of Eastern Europe that, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were most influenced by Western Europe. The modernization of Jews in the German states set the pace for Jews of Austria-Hungary; German language and culture were the hallmarks of modernity. (Horchow's obituary claimed that he had attended the University of Vienna, an educational credential with considerable prestige.) Atlas and Horchow could more easily

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[26] "Men Who Helped Make Portsmouth," Portsmouth Daily Times (March 6, 1924), 1. Family history from Bernard Levi, interview with author, August 21, 1994.

[27] "Samuel Horchow Passes Away in Columbus Hospital," Portsmouth Daily Times (March 21, 1924), 3. Horchow's grandson Roger operates the upscale mail-order business known as The Horchow Collection.

adapt to an American Jewish community infused with a sense of Germanness. Their success was accelerated by their ability to attach themselves to a Jewish community that had already achieved social acceptability. Other East Europeans eventually reached the middle class also. With a few very wealthy – but even fewer poor – constituents, the Portsmouth Jewish community's homogeneity reinforced its stability.[28]

In the mid-Ohio Valley, new Jewish communities and congregations sprang to life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Across the river from Cincinnati, the villages of Covington and Newport, Kentucky, developed their own Jewish identities. A few Jewish families had lived in this Cincinnati hinterland in the mid-nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, as the expansion of Cincinnati's regional economy brought northern Kentucky into its metropolitan orbit, East European Jewish immigrants moved into Covington and Newport's poorer neighborhoods, sometimes after a sojourn in Cincinnati. In 1897, United Hebrew Congregation, an Orthodox synagogue, was incorporated in Newport; in 1905, the congregation dedicated a refurbished former Christian church as its synagogue. Covington Jews also began around 1906 to organize an Orthodox congregation; in 1915, they bought a building lot and dedicated their synagogue the next year.[29]

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[28] Bernard Levi, interview with author, August 21, 1994. Re Jews in Austria-Hungary: Diner, A Time for Gathering, 33.

[29] Re Newport: Menorah 22:4 (April 1897), 238; Lee Shai Weissbach, The Synagogues of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 153, 155. Re Covington: Leslie Lassetter, "The Story of Covington's Schule, The Temple of Israel," Nearprint – Geography file, AJA, 7-8; Weissbach, Synagogues of Kentucky, 151. Where dates differ, I have used Weissbach's information. Nathan Karlsruher of Cincinnati had a paper goods and rag/scrap metal business in Covington in the 1860s (Deborah 7 [November 23, 1860], 84). In 1866, Fanny Levy of Covington married Samuel Wormser of New York (Wormsers also lived in Madison, Ind.) at her home, with Rabbi Max Lilienthal of Cincinnati officiating (Deborah 11:46 [May 18, 1866], 184). [cont.]

Farther upriver, near Huntington, West Virginia, new East European immigrants organized an Orthodox congregation in Ashland, Kentucky, in 1896. Although a few German Jews had lived in Ashland by the 1870s, they had not formed their own organizations, preferring instead to take membership in B'nai Abraham in Portsmouth. In the early twentieth century, Ashland had a Jewish population of perhaps 40 individuals in a general population of 10,000, some of them German Jewish merchants, but at least an equal number Russians and Poles, working as pack peddlers and junk dealers.[30]

Still farther upriver, Marietta, Ohio, was rapidly settled by an extended clan of Latvian families that included the Rabinovitzes, the Brachmans, and the Berens. Once their chain migration had begun, most of these immigrants came directly to Marietta, where they found an economic niche on the periphery of the local oil industry. The enterprising arrival would scour the oil fields for scrap metal, rope, and other abandoned

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In 1900, Covington and Newport were Kentucky's second and third largest cities (after Louisville), but they were still considered satellites of Cincinnati (Lowell H. Harrison, and James C. Klotter, A New History of Kentucky [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997], 229).

The Covington congregation's fundraising was inventive. They had enlisted the help of Covington's (non-Jewish) mayor, George Phillips, who agreed without knowing quite what to do. He turned for advice to a prominent Jewish leader whom everyone knew, Rabbi David Philipson at HUC. "The Jewish people of this City have honored me by making me Chairman of a campaign for the purpose of raising the amount of $3,000.00 to pay off the indebtedness of the new Church they are building here," the mayor wrote, asking Philipson's help in "speaking to some influential Jewish person for a liberal donation." The rabbi was not amused. Although it was welcome and praiseworthy for non-Jews to contribute to such causes, he noted, it was certainly not usual for a non-Jew to be a campaign chairman: "This work should be done by Jews." In a postscript, Philipson asks Phillips for the address of the congregational treasurer so that he himself might forward a donation. And/or perhaps also a rebuke? Perhaps, in Philipson's eyes, the request to the mayor smacked of a ghetto mentality of (by necessity) appealing to the ruler for favors. Or perhaps it smacked of the embroilment of immigrant Jews in the corruption-ridden hurly-burly of early twentieth century city politics. One can only speculate on the Covington community's motives. George Phillips to Rabbi David Philipson, September 13, 1915, photocopy in Northern Kentucky Jewish Family Reunion file, AJA; Rabbi David Philipson to George Phillips, September 21, 1915, MS 35, Box 1, file 15, AJA (photocopy in Northern Kentucky Jewish Family Reunion file, AJA).

[30] Membership of B'nai Abraham included George Bornheim of Ashland (Congregation Bene Abraham minute book, June 29, 1873). Population data: Town Data card – Ashland, 1909, Box 123, IRO papers; Weissbach, "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective," 261.

materials, which he would collect and resell. The pace of oil production meant that this recycling work was, if difficult, reasonably profitable.[31]

The families also very early got into oil production. While at least a dozen Marietta Jews listed their business in the 1900 census as "junk," Herman Appleman, an early arrival, was already an "oil well supervisor." Most of these East Europeans at first lived in the neighborhood around Hart and South Fourth Streets, near the Ohio River, often next door to or on the same lot as their businesses. In 1908, a visitor from New York observed how all of Marietta's Jews seemed "more or less prosperous." In fact, as early as 1902, about half of all Jews in Marietta, including even the newest residents, owned real property.[32]

By 1900, the community had reached sufficient numbers (perhaps as many as 100 individuals, including children) to organize a formal congregation – an Orthodox congregation, which they named Binae Israel. Most of the founders were from the core families, including president Herman Appleman, but other East Europeans also participated, including Nathan Newman and his new brother-in-law, Edward Evin. In the early years, membership numbered about two dozen men. They hired E. M. Mosinter as an all-purpose communal functionary – *schochet, baal tfilah, baal koreh, mohel,* and *melamed*; he and his wife also ran a small grocery. Mosinter was succeeded by a number of men who kept the job for only two or three years, but some stability was achieved

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[31] Morris Miller died in 1907 after being struck by a train while driving his junk-cart out to the oil fields. The local newspaper commented that "the aged Jew" was "a familiar sight on the streets of this city as he drove his one horse wagon from place to place on his daily rounds" (Marietta Times [May 6, 1907], 1).

[32] Henry Goldstein [to David Bressler?], May 28, 1908, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers. Data on residence and property ownership aggregated from Atlas of the City of Marietta (Chicago: George F. Cram & Co., 1902).

when Aaron Axelrod held the position from 1918 until the early 1930s. The community also had its own cemetery, a tract of land on Cisler Ridge purchased in 1902, and a synagogue, in a converted house on Hart Street purchased in 1903.[33]

Marietta's Orthodox community was extremely close-knit, and there were a number of marriages among the family groups. The community was very strict in its observance of Jewish law and well-connected within traditionalist circles. In 1909, Sarah Rabinowitz, Isaac Hertz Rabinowitz' eighteen-year-old daughter, married Bernard Revel, a rabbi and scholar who later founded and served as first president of Yeshiva University. Writes Revel's biographer, accurately, "The worldly Jewish residents of the thriving Marietta community were enchanted by him." The local press made the most of the event. The Register-Leader pronounced it "one of the prettiest Jewish weddings to occur in Marietta in some time," though the paper got many of the details wrong, including, in one reference, the groom's name. The Times account was more grandiose: it was "an important event in Hebrew circles all over the country." After all, the bride was "very popular and highly educated" and the groom was "one of the most brilliant Hebrews of the country." The officiants were Bernard Levinthal of Philadelphia and Moses Simon Sivitz of Pittsburgh, two rabbis who were Revel's mentors and leaders of Agudat

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[33] Re founding: Congregation Binae Israel Minute Book, April 23, 1900. The same issue of Die Zeitung that announced the Feicke-Evin wedding carried another item announcing that "our Israelite neighbors" held a fund-raising ball "with the best of their society" to purchase a cemetery lot. Several months later, the American Israelite reported that the Mariettans had dedicated a cemetery and "celebrated the event by a banquet and jollification in the evening" (44:50 [June 9, 1898], 7). Membership: Congregation Binae Israel minute book, April 23, September 8, and October 14, 1900; July 23, 1901; October 1, 1905. Per congregational minute book, these rabbis/reverends were Isaac Jacob Perlman (1902-1906), Samuel Mandel (1906-1908), Joshua Heschel Aaron (1908-1911), Isaac Nadel (1912-1913), and Moshe Rabinowitz (1913-1918). Axelrod's tenure calculated from city directories. Herman Appleman was the largest single contributor to the synagogue and cemetery purchases and also made several loans that he later forgave. Congregation Binae Israel minute book, February 24, 1902; May 17, 1903; and September 7, 1907.

Harabbanim, a rabbinical group that firmly opposed any Americanization of Judaism. Sivitz, who had introduced the couple, was considered by Marietta Jews their *mara d'atra* (halakhic authority), to whom they turned with questions of Jewish law.[34]

In Marietta, then, the East Europeans had the upper hand, maintaining strong institutions and social exclusiveness. Coming into town almost *en masse*, they had no need to assimilate to or in any other way deal with a pre-existing local Jewish elite. Although they remained as insular as possible for a small town, these Marietta Jews evidently did not experience much antisemitism. Local historian Paula Roush Riggs uncovered ample evidence of disparaging attitudes toward recent arrivals from southern and eastern Europe, but nothing referring specifically to Jews. Jews did play a role in local dramas that exemplified the anxieties about social morality pervasive in Marietta in this period – but in perhaps unexpected ways. [35]

One Sunday in 1899, Marietta police discovered E. M. Mosinter doing business at his grocery in violation of a closing law. Mosinter knew the ways of a small town; he "went to the Mayor and told his troubles, but while he was gone, the police locked up his clerk upon his refusal to close the doors." When Mosinter explained that he closed his store on Saturday in observance of **his** Sabbath, he was given permission to re-open and his clerk was released from custody. The city was of course under no legal compulsion to acquiesce, but the fact that Mosinter evidently placed high value on **his** religion was

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[34] Marietta Register-Leader (June 25, 1909), 4-5; Marietta Daily Times (June 25, 1909), 5; Aaron Rothkoff, Bernard Revel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), 16, 35, 40 (quote), 143. Rothkoff says (39-40) that the Rabinowitz family was "identified with Lubavitch [Hasidism]." I have not seen or heard any other evidence of such an affiliation at the time.

[35] The existence in Marietta of other kinds of Jews was barely in the consciousness of the Orthodox community. In the 1970s, when I interviewed several Orthodox, some of whom had lived in Marietta since the 1910s, no one remembered any non-Orthodox Jews ever having lived in town, with the exception of leading merchant Joseph Josephy.

apparently more important to the Protestant authorities than which religion it was. Also, though his status as local rabbi was not mentioned in the newspaper account, the authorities may have been aware and respectful of that status.[36]

The "Old Testament" connection, then, evidently could be a plus with Protestants. In 1918, a certain Jacob Trotsky ("namesake," the Register-Leader notes coyly, "of the notorious Bolsheviki leader") was arrested for vagrancy and taken before Mayor Crawford in police court. The mayor, shocked to encounter a Jewish bum, was prompted to remark that the poor man "apparently had none of the characteristic ambition of his race." "'You're not a full-blooded Jew?'" the mayor asked Trotsky, who declared that he was. "'Then you have lost the birthright of your fathers,' asserted the mayor." Crawford's peremptory removal of this unfortunate from the Abrahamic covenant may very well have reflected his distaste for associating him in any way with the hard-working, successful Jews of Marietta.[37]

In less than forty years, Pittsburgh's Jewish population grew more than tenfold, surging from 5,000 in 1890 to 53,000 in 1927. Soon both East European and (usually more seasoned) German Jews began flowing into the smaller cities and towns of its extended hinterland, like the Ohio River towns of Steubenville and East Liverpool, Ohio. These towns, like many country towns in the area, had a few Jewish families, but no

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36 Marietta Daily Times (December 18, 1899), 1.

37 Marietta Register-Leader (October 18, 1918), 5. Crawford's remark reveals an interesting juxtaposition of positive images of **both** the "mythological Jew" and the "Jew next door" (see discussion in Chapter 2). It is a converse example of what Jonathan Sarna describes as the Protestant strategy of "elimination" of tensions between stereotype and reality. In Sarna's examples, modern Jews are made acceptable by differentiating them from their less enlightened ancestors; in this case, a modern Jew is made **un**acceptable by differentiating him from his **distinguished** ancestors.

Jewish communal organization. Now they gathered Jews from Pittsburgh and the industrial areas of northern Ohio. Following the traditional Jewish commercial path, these new residents recreated the pattern of the mid-nineteenth century German Jewish immigrants in a more thoroughly industrialized and ethnically diverse context.

Steubenville had a small population of German Jewish merchants since the 1860s, some of whom had lived in town for decades – even into a second generation – and done well financially and socially. In the late nineteenth century, as a thriving industrial town, Steubenville attracted a large number of Southern and Eastern Europeans generally, predominantly Italians but also large numbers of Hungarians, Poles, and Russians. Included in this new immigration were many Jews, who began to arrive around 1880, with the pace accelerating in the late 1880s. Between 1900 and 1910, Steubenville's general population grew 60 percent, from 14,000 to 22,000, as Wheeling Steel and Weirton Steel established industrial dominance in the city. The 1900 U.S. census listed 46 Russian-born residents in all of Jefferson County; by 1910, there were 830 in the city of Steubenville alone. A sizable percentage of these were Jews, mostly in marginal businesses like junk. In the early twentieth century, Steubenville's Jewish population of approximately 300 individuals was three-quarters Russian or Polish and only 5% German.[38]

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[38] German Jewish merchants in nineteenth-century Steubenville included Bavarian-born Jonas Munker, who arrived in the 1860s, was a prosperous merchant tailor, a Mason, and a "stalwart Republican," active in city government (James Alfred White, "Immigrants and Immigrant Groups in Steubenville: 1860-1920," Master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1967: 30). Though lauded in his 1915 obituary as "one of [Steubenville's] most influential and progressive and respected citizens," Munker had retired to New York City around 1900, supervising his Ohio business through local managers (Steubenville Herald-Star (September 17, 1915), 1). Likewise, the May family lived for many years in Steubenville without being part of a local Jewish community. William May and his sons were involved in many businesses, including clothing (at which William made "an ample fortune"), lumber, and furniture stores, and a "bending works" which manufactured automobile frames. William's brother Joseph retired from the clothing business in the early 1900s to do investments with his son, Harry, an attorney. All of the May men were heavily involved

The East Europeans started an Orthodox congregation in the 1880s, formally incorporated as B'nai Israel in 1892. In 1903, with membership numbering sixty men, B'nai Israel purchased for a synagogue a small, but elegant building on South Fifth Street, a former church, built in 1835. A mikveh was installed in the building that same year, and two years later, the congregation purchased land for a cemetery on Sunset Boulevard. The community engaged immigrant "reverends" for the roles of *chazan* and *schochet*: M.S. Peiros from 1897 to 1906, and Isaac Caplan from 1906 to 1923.[39]

Steubenville's Orthodox Jews maintained connections with the rapidly growing Orthodox community in Pittsburgh. The 1903 dedication of B'nai Israel was attended by Rabbi Aaron Ashinsky, Pittsburgh's leading moderate Orthodox rabbi, as well as by Wheeling's ultra-Reform Rabbi Harry Levi. Ashinsky cultivated connections throughout the Upper Ohio Valley, soliciting support for major communal projects in Pittsburgh, such the Hebrew Institute. Teachers trained at the Institute were hired in Steubenville. One of these, in 1910, may have been Isaac Adler, who ran the existing Talmud Torah for

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in civic and fraternal organizations: Masons, Elks, and the Chamber of Commerce (Joseph B. Doyle, 20th Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio, and Representative Citizens [Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing, 1910], 743, 787, 887, 890).

A substantial percentage of Steubenville's East European Jewish immigrants were Hungarian. Demographic data: White, "Immigrants and Immigrant Groups in Steubenville," passim; Town Data report – Steubenville, 1906, Box 123, IRO papers. For general information, see also: Writers' Program of the Works Project Administration, The Ohio Guide, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940).

[39] Arthur Blum, "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," Steubenville, 1977,5-6. Blum bases much of his pamphlet on an earlier congregational booklet, "Golden Anniversary Jubilee, Congregation B'nai Israel, 1902-1952." Both works claim that before 1902, there were two Orthodox congregations, but offer no explanation. Perhaps there were conflicts between Russians and Hungarians. (Blum used his history to attack what he considered the congregation's failings and their incomprehensible inattention to his own proposals. *Caveat lector.*) The 1952 congregational history says that Peiros received a Kabbalah (something less than full ordination) from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor ; if so, he would probably have been from Lithuania. This also suggests a Pittsburgh connection, since that community was predominantly Lithuanian (Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 145).

boys and also organized a Sunday School for girls (an uncommon innovation for an Orthodox synagogue in this era) with the assistance of Rabbi Ashinsky.[40]

Twenty-five miles upriver from Steubenville is East Liverpool, famous as a ceramics manufacture center. The first pottery opened in 1838; by 1940 there were 62 ceramics works employing nearly 10,000 workers. Visitors could see "brick kilns [rising] like beehives all over the city."[41]

Many of the Jewish families who settled in East Liverpool in the mass migration era had previously lived elsewhere in the region. The German Winternitz family, for instance, had lived in Western Pennsylvania since before the Civil War. The Wolks spent seven years in Cleveland after arriving from Lodz, Poland, around 1893. Almost all of East Liverpool's Jewish families made their livings through retail. Many of the Germans were in dry goods or ready-to-wear: the Erlangers' store sold menswear; Gus Bendheim sold shoes. The East European Jews were in a wide range of trades. Some dealt in scrap metal and junk, a few had small groceries, and another few had small businesses in more upscale lines, such as jewelry, furniture, or tailoring. Morris Sarbin ran a tavern. A few were employed as wage workers in the potteries. [42]

With the sudden rise in the Jewish population, two congregations – one Reform and one Orthodox – arose within a few years of each other. Beginning in the 1880s, a

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[40] "Golden Anniversary Jubilee, Congregation B'nai Israel, 1902-1952," 5; "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," 5-6. For Ashinsky: Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 259, 272-75.

[41] Ohio Guide, 434-45. A comprehensive look at the ceramics industry and its impact is William C. Gates, Jr., The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in East Liverpool (East Liverpool: East Liverpool Historical Society, 1984).

[42] Herschel Rubin, "Notes for Program for Kiwanis Club of East, Liverpool, Ohio, 22 August 1991," typescript; Miriam Fredland Levite, personal communication with author, August 15, 1994. Unless otherwise noted, all items courtesy Herschel Rubin and Congregation Beth Shalom, East Liverpool.

small group had held Reform High Holiday services in private homes. Most participants were German Jews who had been in the U.S. for many years but had only recently moved to East Liverpool. In 1894, the group designated itself Congregation B'nai Israel, and in 1909 affiliated with the UAHC. The congregation was tiny; only twenty men were charter members. In its early years, the congregation rented space from various fraternal organizations, including the Elks, Moose, and Odd Fellows, until constructing a building in 1921. Rabbis from Wheeling, Cleveland or Youngstown would visit occasionally to lead services, especially the religious school's confirmation services. In the early twentieth century, the Orthodox also organized, first as a minyan and then as a formal congregation, named B'nai Jacob, which incorporated in 1904. This group also met in private homes and then a rented hall until a building was constructed on East Third Street in 1915.[43]

The East Liverpool congregations included Jews who lived in the tiny neighboring towns of Wellsville, Ohio, Midland, Pennsylvania, and Newell and Chester, West Virginia, all within a ten-mile radius. There were only a few families in each of these towns: for example, the Finemans and the Gordons constituted the entire peak Jewish population of Chester in the 1920s and 1930s.[44]

Despite the moderate size of Steubenville and East Liverpool and the small size of the Jewish communities, the social demography was, in some important respects, more

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[43] Visiting rabbis at B'nai Israel included Abram Brill of Wheeling, Leonard Wolsey of Cleveland and Isidor Philo of Youngstown. Re B'nai Israel: Eva Wasbutzky, "Remembrances of East Liverpool's Early Jewish Community," typescript, April 5, 1976; B'nai Israel Articles of Incorporation, June 27, 1919; Temple B'nai Israel Dedication booklet, May 14, 1922. Re B'nai Jacob: B'nai Jacob record book, 1946-56; Rubin, "Notes for Program for Kiwanis Club."

[44] Alvin Fineman, interview with author, November 1994.

similar to that of the large industrial cities than of county seats like Portsmouth. Both towns had a variety of immigrant communities. In Steubenville, most ethnic groups, especially those of recent settlement, lived in a few distinct residential areas. For instance, many Russians, both Jews and non-Jews, lived in a few blocks of Eighth and Ninth Streets. Most of East Liverpool's East European Jewish immigrants lived in the East End of town, a less affluent neighborhood with its own business district, that was also home to a large and varied ethnic Catholic population. Ethnic tensions, while not of major proportions, were certainly pervasive, and were more salient to intergroup relations than was religion. Some long-time residents of East Liverpool suggest, for instance, that the Orthodox Jews there suffered less from actual antisemitism, which was seldom an issue for the Reform, than from a general bias towards immigrants and ethnics.[45]

The growth of Pittsburgh also helped expand the Jewish population in western Pennsylvania, including along the approximately thirty–mile length of the Ohio River as it winds downstream from its origin in the heart of Pittsburgh, in towns such as McKees Rocks, Coraopolis, Aliquippa, Monaca, Rochester, Beaver, and Midland. The iron, steel, and coal industries were born in the western Pennsylvania countryside in the early nineteenth century, but before the advent of railroads in the 1850s, this rural hinterland was relatively isolated from Pittsburgh. After the Civil War, the countryside quickly

[45] White, "Immigrants and Immigrant Groups in Steubenville: 1860-1920," 67; Paul Tobin, interview with author, August 1994.

became integrated into the city's industrial expansion, an expansion that would not have been possible without access to western markets via the Ohio River.[46]

As early as the 1850s, a few Jews were merchants in the small towns on the river, but the population increased rapidly after the Civil War. In fact, immediately post-war, German Jewish population in the small towns of western Pennsylvania grew faster than it did in Pittsburgh, though it leveled off in the 1870s. These small town Jews maintained contacts with Pittsburgh through the visits to their town of city-based Jewish peddlers.[47]

By the turn of the century, the western Pennsylvania countryside was becoming noticeably less rural and agricultural, and more dependent on the scattered mines, oil and gas wells, and factories that were part of the metropolitan industrial system. As a result of this economic emphasis, a different type of small town developed there – a hinterland industrial town, often company-owned, a sharp contrast to the small towns which were service centers for agricultural regions. Unskilled immigrants formed the labor force, resulting in high proportions of foreign-born residents.[48]

Between 1900 and 1927, Pittsburgh's Jewish population mushroomed from about 13,000 – some 3% of the metropolitan population – to 53,000 – about 8%. This growth reverberated throughout the region, and Jewish communities began to take shape in the small towns down the Ohio River from the city. As in Steubenville and East Liverpool,

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[46] Edward Muller, "Metropolis and Region: A Framework for Enquiry Into Western Pennsylvania," in Samuel P. Hays, ed., City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 189-92.

[47] Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 56, 62-64, 69. David Cohen was a merchant in Rochester in the 1850s. In 1871, twelve Jewish families from Rochester, and the neighboring towns of New Brighton and Beaver Falls, hosted Rev. Judah Wechsler, formerly of Portsmouth, and then of Columbus, as guest speaker.

[48] Muller, "Metropolis and Region," 195-96.

the demographics of these western Pennsylvania communities created a very different atmosphere from the small Jewish communities farther downriver; social organization was influenced by patterns of relationships that carried over from the Old Country. Urban patterns of social stratification, residential segregation, and ethnic divison of labor all appeared in the industrial small towns. One such ethnic division of labor was the concentration of Jews in small business. As in the city, very few Jews worked in the steel mills and factories. Around 1900, perhaps only thirty or forty Jews labored in the large Pittsburgh steel mills and no more than a few hundred total in other plants such as Westinghouse. Steel provided, however, an important auxiliary occupation, as immigrant Jews began to deal in scrap iron.[49]

Jewish institutions began to appear in these small western Pennsylvania Ohio River towns. Rochester, about twenty miles from Pittsburgh and with 100 Jewish residents, was a hub for neighboring towns. Eighteen of the twenty-eight charter members of Tree of Life congregation in 1927 were from Rochester; five were from Monaca, two from Beaver, two from Freedom, and one from Conway. Another ten miles

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[49] Muller, "Metropolis and Region," 197; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 100, 104, 137.

Ewa Morawska's superb sociological study, Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) discusses social and ethnic stratification in industrial small towns. The book is an extremely detailed study of the Jewish community of Johnstown, Pa., a coal and steel town seventy miles southeast of Pittsburgh. Johnstown had a peak Jewish population between the two World Wars of about 1200, in a general population of about 50,000, which makes it similar only to Evansville and Wheeling in the present study. Unlike those Ohio Valley cities, though, almost all Johnstown Jews – and much of the Gentile population – were from Eastern Europe, and economic and (to a lesser extent) social life reproduced European patterns, with Jews filling a specific entrepreneurial ethnic niche. Morawska identifies both this specific demographic setting **and** Jewish community size as factors in these Jews' retention of a "more substantial, and more visible, component of old-country traditional patterns" as compared to Jews in either the large cities or the smaller towns. The experience of Jews in the much smaller industrial towns discussed here shares characteristics of both the Johnstown experience and that of the East Europeans in the small-town South (and the rest of the Ohio Valley) as discussed by Lee Shai Weissbach in "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South" (American Jewish History 85:3 [September 1997], 231-62).

downriver was Midland, whose population more than quadrupled in the 1910s as its steel mill expanded. In 1918, the nearly 100 Jews in Midland chartered their own Orthodox congregation. McKees Rocks, only a few miles from downtown Pittsburgh, was the site of several large iron and steel companies set up in the 1880s; Jews there started their own synagogue in 1903. Jews in Coraopolis, which is also quite close to the city, did not organize its own synagogue until 1923, when the Jewish population was over 200, though a Ladies Aid Society was already active.[50]

The steel industry expansion in the 1910s caused the population of Aliquippa to spurt from 3,300 in 1910 to over 15,000 in 1920, with a concomitant growth in the Jewish population. One group of Hungarian Jews clustered in the older part of town, near the river, in West Aliquippa, where they attended Orthodox congregation Beth Jacob, organized around 1912. Another, larger group lived in the Woodlawn section, where Agudath Achim, also Orthodox, was chartered in 1919. That year, there were perhaps three hundred Jews in a total local population of 2000 – 15% of the total.[51]

The Upper Valley also featured "instant" towns, such as Weirton, West Virginia, and Ambridge, Pennsylvania, company town of the American Bridge Company. In these towns, populated largely by iron and steel workers, virtually all the Jewish residents were East Europeans. Ambridge was a company town of the purest variety, built in 1903 for the American Bridge plant of U.S. Steel. The population more than doubled between

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[50] Muller, "Metropolis and Region," 197; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 195-96, 204-6. Re Midland: Charter, Sons of Israel Congregation, 1918, Histories file, AJA. It is unclear how long this congregation lasted; after it folded, Midland Jews affiliated with the Orthodox congregation B'nai Jacob in East Liverpool, Ohio. Re Coraopolis: Minutes of Ladies Aid Society, 1921-1935, microfilm 1029, AJA.

[51] Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 205; American Jewish Year Book 5679 (1918-1919), 62.

1910 and 1920, bringing Jewish merchants, who chartered Beth Samuel Synagogue in 1914. By 1920, there were about 200 Jewish residents.[52]

Weirton is forty miles west of Pittsburgh and about thirty miles north of Wheeling, in the heart of northeast West Virginia's industrial belt. The city grew up along with a steel mill built in 1909 by Ernest Weir. Jews were among the first residents that same year: Sam Geffner, a Rumanian immigrant whose first occupation was peddling, came from Pittsburgh to set up a small store in the new town. Other Jews from Eastern and Central Europe came to Weirton from Pittsburgh or other area small towns. By 1916, there were approximately 15 Jewish families in Weirton, totalling about seventy individuals. That year, the families banded together to form a small Orthodox congregation, named Beth Israel. They met in a rented hall and used a *Sefer Torah* borrowed from a congregation in nearby Steubenville. In 1919, the women organized a Ladies Auxiliary. In the early 1920s, the congregation reportedly employed as rabbi one Jacob Perlman, who served Orthodox communities of Wheeling and Marietta. In 1924, the congregation bought a building lot at the corner of West Street and Virginia Avenue, and three years later dedicated small structure for a synagogue.[53]

In the late nineteenth century, Bellaire, Ohio, across the Ohio River near Wheeling, turned from a small country town with a few German Jewish merchants into an industrial outpost dominated by East Europeans. In the mid-nineteenth century, some

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[52] Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 205.

[53] Weir's co-investors included Maurice and Leon Falk of Pittsburgh. Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 161; Rabbi Nandor Marton, "The Jewish History of Weirton, W. Va.," typescript, 1953, Histories file, AJA, 1, 3; Irwin Bogarad, interview with author, February 25, 1996; Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1256; American Jewish Year Book 5679 (1918-1919), 54, 64.

fifty or sixty Jews lived in Bellaire (including, at one point, Rabbi Judah Wechsler) and they had at least some sort of communal organization. The course of events in the late nineteenth century is confusing, as the sources are contradictory. In any event, by the turn of the century, Bellaire had two congregations, split along German Reform/East European Orthodox lines, serving a total Jewish population of probably no more than 125.[54]

But a significant expansion in Bellaire's Jewish population soon came from an influx of East Europeans. By 1907, the Jewish community totalled 250 or 300 persons, and Russian- and Rumanian-born Jews outnumbered the German Jews by 70% to 30%. A substantial number of the new immigrants, close to half of the Orthodox population, had come to town under the auspices of the Industrial Removal Office. The IRO's

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[54] In 1889, the American Israelite (36:20 [November 14], 6) announced the formation of a new congregation in Bellaire, the officers of which were German and Alsatian Jews, many of them clothing merchants. A Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, which ran a Sunday school, was already active. A local history (Laurance F. Good, "Brief history of the Sons of Israel Congregation," 1989, typescript, SC-823, AJA) gives the date for the Reform congregation as 1896; this is confirmed by an article in Menorah 21:2 (August 1896), 109. Since the names of the organizers overlap, it is probably the same group. (Also, the Sons of Israel Congregation minutebook [AJA] begins in 1896.) Elsewhere, local historian Laurance Good suggests that the earlier entity was "restructured" in 1890 into an Orthodox congregation that retained the original name of Agudas Achim ("Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling"). Dr. Jules Duga, a native of Bellaire, was told that there was a third "ultra-Orthodox" congregation at the turn of the century. Neither Dr. Duga nor I have found any other evidence of this. Perhaps it was simply a private minyan (personal communications with author, July 31, 1994 and December 23, 1996).

In 1901, the Reform congregation reported in the American Israelite (47:35 [February 28], 2) that they had fourteen families, who met on both Friday evening and Saturday morning. Isaac Blum served as lay reader, and once a month Rabbi Harry Levi from Wheeling would visit. The congregation erected a building in 1911. Agudas Achim rented space until they moved in 1923 into a renovated private home; they built a new building in 1950 (Good, "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling").

Rabbi Judah Wechsler was married in Bellaire in 1855 to Jeannette Rosenbach of Cumberland, Maryland; Isaac Strouse, who served as *chazan* in Wheeling a few years later, performed the ceremony (Die Deborah 1:15 [November 30, 1855], 120). Nineteenth-century population estimates: "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling."

experience in Bellaire, especially in contrast to other Ohio River communities, is an excellent case study of the challenges that faced this interesting organization.[55]

The IRO was founded in 1901 to promote immigrant Jewish settlement in cities and towns in the interior of the United States. This ambitious project was sponsored by the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society and financed by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. A classic example of the progressive era's faith in social engineering, the IRO's underlying concern was to stem antisemitism, and thereby save open immigration, by normalizing Jewish occupations and broadening geographic distribution. Before disbanding in 1922, the IRO had relocated 79,000 immigrants to 1,670 cities and towns across the U.S.[56]

In view of the planning, money, and hard work invested, the IRO has usually been judged a mixed success at best. Many of the small cities and towns in the Ohio River Valley seemed ideal by IRO criteria, which identified "open space" with healthy living, and the immigrants' conformity with Americanism. These towns were regional economic centers, seemed to exemplify American civic virtue, and had established German-Jewish communities. Yet few immigrants were ever placed in the Ohio River towns by the IRO and those who were seldom stayed long. Indeed, neither the size of the city in which the immigrant settled, nor the size of the Jewish community already there, nor its distance from a major city, were good predictors of success or longevity. Success stories came

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[55] Estimate of 250: Town Data card – Bellaire, 1907, Box 123, IRO papers. Estimate of 300: American Jewish Year Book 1914-15, 372.

[56] The history of the IRO is detailed in Jack Glazier, Dispersing the Ghetto: The Relocation of Jewish Immigrants across America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). See also Robert A. Rockaway, Words of the Uprooted: Jewish Immigrants in Early Twentieth-Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), which includes a good overview of the materials in the AJHS's IRO collection (205-9). The term "social engineering" is unselfconsciously used by Samuel Joseph in the introduction his History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1935).

out of some small towns, while turnover rates in some cities, such as Columbus and Detroit, were very high.[57]

The IRO came to most of the small communities of the Ohio River Valley in the wake of the depression of 1907. The hope was that expanding into new areas would offset job losses in areas where immigrants had already been placed. This strategy was only partly successful. Immigrants were indeed sent further from New York than before, many to the Central States. But economically depressed small towns were no better than economically depressed cities. In 1908, traveling agent Henry Goldstein visited Ironton, Ohio, and wrote to IRO general manager David Bressler, "Coming in to Ironton my first impulse was to get out as soon as I got in but as no train goes out until to-morrow morning I made my investigation which only confirmed my first impressions." Goldstein did not even attempt to form a committee to support the IRO from among the ten local Jewish families. In Goldstein's opinion, "the town is dead and I feel no one we might send could be satisfactorily placed or would stay."[58]

But economics was only part of the story. Equally critical were other factors where individual and group personalities could thwart or aid the IRO's scheme. These factors – immigrants' social and cultural attitudes and needs, and the ability of established Jewish communities to meet those needs – are, of course, closely related. From the outset, the IRO knew it had to deal with the German Jews' ambivalence and to open

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[57] Glazier, Dispersing the Ghetto, 149; Joseph, Baron de Hirsch Fund, 184, 194, 197, 203; Robert Rockaway, "'I Feel as if Newly Born:' Immigrant Letters to the Industrial Removal Office," American Jewish Archives 45 (1993), 192.

[58] Henry Goldstein to David Bressler, 19 May 1908, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers; Joseph, Baron de Hirsch Fund, 194, 201. The Central States, particularly the eastern region, were the "mainstay of IRO activity"; in fact, Ohio was first in the number of removals resettled – 10,000 in total (Glazier, Dispersing the Ghetto, 143, 196).

immigrants' minds to the possibilities of living in the American interior, away from the ethnic supports of New York. The IRO's traveling agents attempted to make connections and to foster the negotiation of differences between immigrant and settled Jews, and among factions within the settled communities. But the lack of cooperation between segments of the community, for instance in Evansville and Steubenville, made for limited success.[59]

Extreme divisiveness was unusual in the Ohio River Valley, but even decent intracommunal relations, like decent economic conditions, did not guarantee success. Immigrants unfamiliar with the American interior and/or with substantial interactions with Gentiles were often uncomfortable in small-town settings, and there were limits to what settled Jews, especially of a different immigrant background, could do about it. The Jewish community of Portsmouth was sympathetic to the IRO's project, but the town was of limited appeal to immigrants. In the judgment of one IRO official who visited Portsmouth, "[t]he people here are very nice but they have neither a permanent Rabbi nor a Bnai Brith lodge -- hence a sort of a lukewarm Judaism." He warned, "It is best for people still here [i.e., New York] to understand that they can not live with Jews not kosher." In this view, the social stability created, at great effort, by the Reform strategy, was not worth the cultural cost.[60]

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[59] Glazier, Dispersing the Ghetto, 142-69. Rockaway (Words of the Uprooted) simplistically over-emphasizes German-Russian antagonisms and implicitly blames these antagonisms on the Germans, with their "arrogance" (205) and "hysterical reactions" (206). By contrast, he praises the East Europeans' "dignity and assertive manner" (207).

[60] Stanley Bero to David Bressler, January 29, 1910, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers. By the 1920s there evidently was a B'nai B'rith lodge (Portsmouth Daily Times [January 5, 1925], 2).

Bellaire was one of the IRO's few certifiable success stories in the Ohio River Valley, and that story exposes the factor for success that trumped the others. Not only had many immigrants come to Bellaire under the auspices of the IRO, a majority remained. Those who left often went to other small towns; the IRO was quite gratified that "none went back to N.Y." IRO agent Stanley Bero wrote to general manager Bressler in 1907, "I was never so pleased in all the days of my travels, as I was at Bellaire where at the orthodox synagogue I met about 15 of the heads of families sent here by the IRO. The city is very poor industrially and the Jews are not as well fixed as in Wheeling. Our people all make a fair living[;] most peddle junk."[61]

The removals were also satisfied. At his Bellaire meeting, Bero told Bressler, "they drew up resolutions expressing their gratitude to the IRO which will be sent to you and copies will be sent to the Jewish press of New York . . . . I spoke in Yiddish, [and] the people assured me that they not alone understood but felt my words. It would have done your heart good to be here. I know it made me feel proud and I shall use this town as proof in the other towns." A year later, in 1908, another IRO agent, Henry Goldstein, also spoke enthusiastically about Bellaire as "a town of excellent opportunities for our people." Though some layoffs had recently occurred, Goldstein thought that these were temporary economic setbacks. (In fact, Goldstein noted, Ohio's progressive child labor regulations forced industries to hire young men rather than boys, providing opportunities for immigrant men.) The local Jews "reported that there was little or no Rishus [antisemitism] in this town." Goldstein looked up former removals and reported that

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61 Town Data card – Bellaire, 1907, Box 123, IRO papers; Stanley Bero to David Bressler, 3 Nov. 1907, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers.

though more had left town than Bero thought, a large percentage had settled permanently, making a living as small-scale merchants or artisans.[62]

What accounted for this success? The economic situation in Bellaire was not especially promising. There was no unusual degree of intra-Jewish cooperation. The IRO attempted to establish working relationships with both the German Reform and the East European Orthodox contingents, but they seem to have relied more heavily on the Germans, undoubtedly in the hope that their overall prosperity and social standing would be helpful. Despite their sense of *noblesse oblige*, the Germans were not especially enthusiastic about the project. Bero observed that their reluctance "was due to the attitude of A. Luchs who foreshadowed the risks in having people come here of the character etc that the average immigrant represent . . . . Try to send a good fellow at first – so that they may not fear to receive a large quota."[63]

It was the personal contacts of the less-established East European immigrants, especially of former removals, which made for the IRO's success, even though these people were the least likely to have much by way of financial resources. East European Jews brought their relatives and landsmen to settle near them, often through the IRO. The Orthodox East Europeans understood the special needs of their fellows. At one Jew's urging, a local Gentile baker agreed to hire an immigrant who would be allowed to

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[62] Stanley Bero to David Bressler, 3 Nov. 1907, and Henry Goldstein to David Bressler, June 2, 1908, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers. For Ohio's labor legislation, see George W. Knepper, Ohio and Its People (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 339, 352-53.

[63] Town Data cards – Bellaire, 1907 and 1909, Box 123; Stanley Bero to David Bressler, June 18, 1910, Traveling Agents, Box 19; both in IRO papers.

observe Shabbat – a not inconsiderable concession. Sam Kapner hired others for his enamel works.[64]

By 1912, Bellaire's Jewish population had soared to over 400. The population growth, and its particular pattern, created a Jewish community that was tightly and intricately interconnected by marriage and business connections. The IRO, in providing opportunities for a few individuals, helped create an entire new immigrant community in Bellaire by fostering the process of chain migration and self-help.[65]

The East European immigration gave an infusion of energy to Jewish life in the Ohio River Valley, but by the middle of the twentieth century, this energy began to flag. While Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville remained diverse and dynamic Jewish communities, the small towns were unable to sustain much diversity of Jewish life, even as they were able to provide comfortable contexts for social and economic life and for a modest level of Jewish activity. And after the 1950s, even that was increasingly unsustainable.

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[64] M. Leschinsky to IRO [December 1904], Gershon Sibulsky to IRO [May 1905]; C.H. Edelman to IRO [January 1905], all in Immigrant Correspondence, Ohio, IRO papers: Charles Lando to IRO, April 17, 1904 - Nov. 11, 1904, Local Agents (Bellaire, Ohio), IRO papers. (Some documents translated from the original Yiddish by the IRO.) Henry Goldstein to David Bressler, June 2, 1908, Traveling Agents, Box 19, IRO papers; Letter to author from Dr. Jules Duga, Columbus, Ohio, July 31, 1994.

[65] Town Data report – Bellaire, 1912, Box 84, IRO papers. Jewish population growth between 1900 and 1912 (167%) was five times that of Bellaire as a whole between 1900 and 1910 (31%). U.S. census of 1910 reported Bellaire's total population as 12,946.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEMISE OF COMMUNITY

The occasional reinvigoration of the river economy may boost a town for a while, but the importance of the Ohio River to Jewish settlement peaked in the mid-nineteenth century and essentially ended with the end of the century. By the mid-twentieth century, the story of the small Jewish communities in the Ohio River towns was more and more similar to that of Jewish communities in a thousand small towns elsewhere in the Midwest and South: population loss, particularly severe after World War II; an aging Jewish population; congregations merging or closing. In contrast, the urban Jewish communities – Cincinnati, Louisville, and Pittsburgh – remain vital.[1]

[1] The percentage of American Jews living in the Midwest has fallen consistently throughout the twentieth century. The percentage in the South declined precipitously from 1900 to mid-century, after which Sunbelt growth (some at the Midwest's expense) made Jewish communities there proportionately even more significant than in 1900. See Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 38-41.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Jewish populations in (most of) the small towns of the Ohio River Valley reached their peak. Some descendants of German Jewish immigrants remained in old family businesses, and the East European immigrants had settled in, acculturated and were raising families. These decades were perhaps the heyday of small town Jewry. Synagogues, sisterhoods, B'nai B'rith and other auxiliary and independent organizations were going strong.[2]

Jews were well-integrated into their communities, balancing the "Jewish" and the "American" in their American-Jewish identities. This was evident, for instance, in 1916, during World War I, when Jews in East Liverpool held a successful fundraising campaign for European Jewry, garnering support from the general community for the work of the Joint Distribution Committee. The town's mayor served as honorary chairman, and non-Jews, including Catholic and Protestant clergy, participated actively. The pastor of First Baptist Church made it the centerpiece of his sermon that week. The local newspaper encouraged these efforts in a major editorial of January 24, 1916. "No race of people are greater sufferers from the European war than the Jews," the editorial asserted. "Usually proudly able and willing to care for their own financial obligations of charity, in this case the need is so appalling that appeal is necessary from them outside of their own nationality . . . . [T]here is a little handful of Jews in the city who can personally take

[2] In fact, in the early twentieth century, B'nai B'rith experienced something of a renewal of importance in small Jewish communities. It also became increasingly Midwestern and middle-class in its orientation (Deborah Dash Moore, B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981], 101). New B'nai Brith lodges were founded in East Liverpool in 1915, and in Huntington and Steubenville in 1916.

charge of the work . . . . Notify Gus Bendheim, Leon Rubin or William Erlanger [to contribute]."[3]

Over $1500 was raised just in three days in the four towns of East Liverpool and Wellsville, Ohio, and in Chester and Newell, West Virginia. Though this sum was but a drop in the bucket of the Joint's eventual total of $20 million dollars, the effort was an important expression of national Jewish unity and of East Liverpool Jewry's sense of belonging on the local level. The Evening Review praised "our fellow citizens of Jewish nationality" and expressed an increased sense of kinship and recognition of cultural pluralism. "Gradually, but most certainly, hyphenation in our American life will be considerably diminished by the experiences drawing us togetherr [sic], forced on us through the European war and by the problems we must face for the sake of our common safety."[4]

During the 1920s, religious life prospered in the small towns. Though a variety of Jewish organizations existed in the twentieth century as they had in the nineteenth, the synagogue still remained the focal institution. In 1922, the Reform congregation in East Liverpool erected a new temple building; Portsmouth built a new one (architecturally quite similar) in 1925. The Orthodox congregation in Bellaire was able to obtain its own building, a renovated private home, in 1923. The Marietta congregation moved

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[3] East Liverpool Evening Review, January 4, 1916; January 21, 1916; January 24, 1916; January 25, 1916; January 26, 1916.

[4] East Liverpool Evening Review, January 28, 1916; February 1, 1916. For the importance of this relief drive to American Jewish unity, see Gerald Sorin, A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 208. The response in East Liverpool is an excellent example of the cultural pluralism analyzed and advocated by philosopher Horace Kallen in the early twentieth century. In Kallen's vision, "individual nationalities [such as Jews] would not only deepen and enrich American culture but would also become channels for the most precious gift America could give, a model for a united states of the world" (Gerald Sorin, Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997], 143).

"uptown," away from the flood plain that was the area of first settlement, in 1921. In Wheeling, increasingly affluent East European Jewish families were moving out of downtown – in local parlance "out-the-pike" towards Oglebay Park, and nicer residential neighborhoods. In 1924, they organized a suburban Orthodox congregation, Synagogue of Israel, with its own building and a rabbi. New Orthodox congregations in the Pennsylvania towns of Coraopolis and Rochester started in 1923 and 1927, respectively.[5]

A new congregation appeared in Steubenville in 1922, Beth El, a Reform congregation organized not by German Jews but by modernizing East Europeans. Like their German predecessors, these East Europeans, as they acculturated, increasingly found Reform Judaism compatible with their new attitudes and expectations, and in the 1920s and 1930s, East Europeans, especially the more acculturated and those of the second generation, began to join Reform temples. Like their nineteenth-century predecessors, the founders of Steubenville's Beth El desired, in their words, "a more modern approach to Judaism." The new congregation dedicated a new temple in 1924. In Ashland, Kentucky, the East Europeans who founded Agudath Achim in 1896 as an Orthodox congregation, also shifted their preferences over the decades. Bi-weekly

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[5] Re Bellaire: Historical Records Survey – Church Survey Forms of Ohio (Ohio Historical Society, 1978, Box 6). Re Coraopolis and Rochester: Jacob Feldman, The Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania: A History, 1755-1945 (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986), 204-6. For Wheeling: "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling, prepared by L. Good, 1989." SC-12958, AJA.

Urban Jewish communities often experienced tensions between religious and secular "cultural" Jews, but in the small town, it was no particular contradiction to belong to both the socialist, anti-religious Workmen's Circle (for example) and to the local Orthodox synagogue. (Ewa Morawska notes this also with respect to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, [Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 138].) In East Liverpool, the Joint Distribution Committee fund drive in 1916 was initiated by the local Workmen's Circle and chaired by Harry Gordon and William Midler, both also members of the local Orthodox congregation (East Liverpool Evening Review, January 4, 1916). The Workmen's Circle, founded in 1892 was socialist, hostile to Jewish nationalism, and anti-religion. Though its radicalism softened over the decades, it was always militantly secular.

Reform services were conducted by a student rabbi from Hebrew Union College as early as 1915 and in 1921 the congregation joined the Reform movement.[6]

Issues affecting the larger Jewish world in the early twentieth century were debated also in the small communities, including, particularly, the issue of Zionism. Although a few Americans had been involved in the organized Zionist movement since its formal inception in 1897, it was only in the World War I years that it blossomed. One factor was the arrival of East European Jews who had been activists in, or at least exposed to, Zionism in Russia and Poland. Another factor was the leadership of Louis Brandeis, whose synthesis of Jewish and American values convinced many that one could be a loyal and authentic Jew and a loyal and authentic American simultaneously. Not all American Jews were persuaded. In the Pittsburgh Platform of 1889 and again in 1897, the rabbinic leaders of Reform Judaism had explicitly repudiated Jewish nationalism. Small town Jews responded to Zionism with a range of reactions.[7]

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[6] Re Steubenville: "Temple Beth El Silver Anniversary, 1924-1949." Re Ashland: "A History of the Jews of Huntington [WV]." The Reform Advocate, October 7, 1916; Ashland Daily Independent, Religion Supplement, December 6, 1994. This move to Reform led to the secession of some members, who constituted themselves as a new Orthodox congregation, House of Israel. For more about the gradual integration of East Europeans into the Reform movement, see Alan Silverstein, Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840-1930 (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1994), 152-57.

Discussing the American South, Lee Shai Weissbach observes how "the transformation of the [distinctive] East European lifestyle was more complete in the South's smaller Jewish centers than it was in the larger centers of the region (or in larger cities in general), because after a few decades no critical mass remained in the small-town environment to allow for the survival of any sort of religiously observant or intensively ethnic Jewish subcommunity" ("East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South," American Jewish History, 85:3 [September 1997], 259).

[7] For mainstream American Zionism, including Brandeis, see Melvin I. Urofsky, American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975). For East European activism, see Mark A. Raider, The Emergence of American Zionism (New York: New York University Press, 1998). Reform opposition to Zionism was significant, especially among the rabbis, but by no means universal or unyielding. For example, it took more than a year for (primarily lay) Zionists in Cincinnati to overcome Rabbi David Philipson's anti-Zionism, so that they could invite Brandeis to the city without all-out internecine warfare. For Reform anti-Zionism generally, see Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), passim; for Brandeis' concerns with local Jewish politics in Cincinnati, see Letters of Louis D. Brandeis, ed. Melvin I.

Some towns undertook modest Zionist activity. At the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, there was a short-lived Zion Society, affiliated with the Federation of American Zionists, in Parkersburg. Steubenville, with a large East European population, was extremely active. In 1925, the local chapter of Mizrachi, the religious Zionists, claimed 70 members, the Steubenville District of the Zionist Organization of America registered 32 men, and Hadassah registered 64 women. Teenagers also participated, through the Daughters of Zion and Sons of Zion clubs. In Weirton, Zionist activity was inaugurated in the mid 1920's by several recent arrivals, East Europeans who had spent a few years in Palestine after World War I before joining relatives in the United States.[8]

In many of the towns with older, established German Jewish communities, however, Zionism was at best irrelevant, at worst anti-American, and in any event a retreat from the bright promise of universal religion. There were active and even important anti-Zionist rabbis in the Ohio River Valley. Evansville's Reform Rabbi Milton Greenwald was a founding member of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACJ). Four of the approximately thirty men who served as student rabbis in Portsmouth between 1901 and 1936 were later associated with the ACJ. Interestingly, Ruth Atlas, daughter of local merchant Henry Atlas, married one of these rabbis, Louis Binstock, and her sister Leona married another, David Lefkowitz, Jr., which certainly

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Urofsky and David W. Levy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973-75), 3: 316, 415, 441; 4: 4-7. There was also significant ultra-Orthodox opposition to Zionism in the United States before 1948 (and insignificant, if annoying, opposition after that), but these communities were in the largest urban centers.

[8] Re Parkersburg: Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1120. Re Steubenville: "Souvenir Program, Purim Entertainment Given by the Religious Schools of Congregation B'nai Israel, Steubenville, Ohio, 1925." Many of the Zionist groups seem to have been initiated by Maurice Gunsberg, who came to Steubenville in 1924 as B'nai Israel's cantor and eventually took over spiritual leadership as well. Re Weirton: Rabbi Nandor Marton, "The Jewish History of Weirton, W. Va.," typescript, 1953, Histories file, AJA, 4. One Weirton activist was Morton Ben-Dovid, ne Caplan, whose fascinating memoir is at the American Jewish Archives (Bendovid, Morton [born Caplan] – Autobiography and Family History, 1984, SC-855, AJA).

suggests that rabbinic conviction and congregational predisposition reinforced each other.[9]

Wheeling's Leshem Shomayim also remained a bastion of the old established German Jews, committed to classical Reform. (For example, at a 1916 congregational celebration, the dinner – which featured oysters – was preceded, though not followed, by "grace.") One of the congregation's young rabbis was Morris Lazaron who, after graduating from HUC in 1914, spent a year in Wheeling. Lazaron was a founder of the ACJ and such a vehement detractor of Israel that in 1949 he was forced to retire from his position at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Ironically, Lazaron was succeeded in Wheeling in 1915-1916 by another recent HUC graduate, Abba Hillel Silver, who later became a prominent Zionist leader. (In a double irony, Lazaron married Pauline Horkheimer of Wheeling, and Silver, her sister Virginia.) Silver's Reform Zionism was something of an aberration, though. In April and May of 1948, the ACJ sent lecturers to sympathetic congregations around the country in a last-ditch protest against Jewish statehood; Rabbi Irving Reichert spoke in Wheeling.[10]

Opposition to Zionism came from several motives, including a certain amount of fear that Jews would be accused of disloyalty to America. Antisemitism was on the increase in the United States in the 1920s, and it did not pass the small towns by,

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[9] Thomas A. Kolsky, Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942-1948 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 206-7. Of the former Portsmouth student rabbis, Louis Binstock, then of Chicago, and Julian Feibelman, then of New Orleans, were two of the thirty-three Reform rabbis who signed the Council's 1943 manifesto; David Lefkowitz, Jr., then of Shreveport, Louisiana, and Allan Tarshish, then of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, were among the additional rabbinic supporters. Re Atlas women: Personal conversation, Bernard Levi, August 21, 1994; obituary of Louis Binstock by David Lefkowitz, Jr., Yearbook – Central Conference of American Rabbis, v. 84, (New York: CCAR, 1974), 202-3).

[10] Re Wheeling's religious orientation: Booklet from celebration of congregation's 60th anniversary, 1916 (Nearprint – Congregation Leshem Shomayim, AJA). Biographies of Lazaron and Silver in American Jewish Year Book 5679 (1918-1919), 363. Re Reichert: Kolsky, Jews Against Zionism, 187.

especially since the Ku Klux Klan was a major social and political force in the Ohio River counties. Jews per se were not the main target of the Klan (immigrants in general were), and in some places the Klan was remarkably unhostile to local Jews. Of course, the Klan's "pro-American," pro-Protestant rhetoric often denounced Jews, causing considerable unpleasantness. But the small Jewish communities weathered this regional crisis, even in the two regions of the Valley most affected, the industrial north and southern Indiana.[11]

The Klan phenomenon was particularly intense in southern Indiana. Even in a state notorious for spending the entire decade of the 1920s under Klan political control, Evansville was a stand-out. It was the site of the first Indiana Klavern in 1920, which claimed 5000 members by 1922, and one of the Klan's most infamous leaders, David Stephenson, began his organizational career there.[12]

On the one hand, interracial tensions in Evansville diverted much attention from Jews. The Klan did attempt a not entirely effective boycott of Jewish businesses. One long-time Jewish resident, in business in Evansville in the 1920s, laughingly remembered how "[f]ellows would come in and say, 'You know, I'm not supposed to buy anything from you.' I would say, 'Okay, I ain't going to tell anybody.'" On the other hand, social

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[11] David Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan (New York: Franklin Watts, 1981), 154-57 re Kentucky and West Virginia, 185 re Illinois, 175-78 re Ohio. For instance, in Portsmouth in 1923, after the mayor ordered the arrest of Klansmen marching as a group to a church dedication, he was voted out of office in that fall's election (Chalmers, 177-78). On the other hand, in Parkersburg, the anti-Klan mayor and council were re-elected that same year (Chalmers, 156). Leonard Dinnerstein (Antisemitism in America [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994]) asserts that "Jews were not generally intimidated by Klansmen in the eastern half of the nation" (98). Chalmers, however, claims that in the small towns and industrial big cities of Ohio, where "the Klan held mighty sway," both "Jewish and Catholic-owned businesses were badly hurt in Klan strongholds" (176, 180). Given the exhaustiveness of Dinnerstein's research, I am inclined to credit his argument, at least with respect to Jews.

[12] Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 163-64; Robert M. Taylor, Jr., ed., Indiana: A New Historical Guide (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989), 191.

antisemitism began to raise barriers that had not previously existed. In the opinion of a member of the Gumberts family, born in 1912 and speaking to an interviewer in 1982, the "limited" socializing between Jews and non-Jews in his youth was "peculiar," a twentieth-century narrowing of expansive nineteenth-century attitudes. While Jews had, in the 1890s, been included in a sort of Social Register of the city, in the 1920s, Jews, even those of long residence, were excluded from certain social clubs and from the Evansville Country Club. In response, a Jewish country club was organized.[13]

The impact of the Klan in the industrial Upper Ohio Valley was shaped by a vigorous – and occasionally violent – response on the part of the large communities of immigrant ethnic Catholic industrial workers. In fact, anti-Klan violence by Catholic workers – in Steubenville in August 1923 and in nearby Niles in November 1924 – was decisive in weakening the northern Ohio Klan by 1925. Jews too made a public stand for their interests, though in a more restrained manner. In 1923, Steubenville's Orthodox congregation, B'nai Israel, sent a committee to the local school board to protest "children being subjected to the reading of the New Testament in school in violation of the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion."[14]

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[13] Re Jewish-Gentile relations: David Holzman, May 17, 1975; William Gumberts, August 20, 1982; Gus Cohen, October 6, 1982 (all interviews by Darrel Bigham); Florita Eichel, March 25, 1974 (interview by Josephine Elliott), all from University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives. Early twentieth-century Evansville was 12% black, and in 1903 was the scene of a major race riot in which eleven people were killed (James H. Madison, The Indiana Way: A State History [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986], 169-71).

In East Liverpool, Ohio, Leon Rubin and Gustav Bendheim broke the restrictive barrier at the local country club in the 1920s, though it soon fell anyway under the financial pressure created by the Depression (Miriam Fredland Levite, personal communication, August 15, 1994). For the country club as status marker (and how this was used against minorities), see James M. Mayo, The American Country Club: Its Origins and Development (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[14] William Jenkins, Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), 39-54, 117-39; "Golden Anniversary Jubilee, Congregation B'nai Israel, 1902-1952." This document does not tell the outcome of the meeting. In other communities too, Jews and Catholics were able to make common cause against the Klan. Across the river from Evansville, in

The experience of Marietta was probably more typical of most small river towns. On a Saturday night in February 1923, the recently-organized Klan demonstrated with a cross-burning on Harmar Hill. The Register-Leader reported that local rumor placed Klan membership at about 200. At the time, Helen Josephy, having graduated from Smith College in 1921, was working for the Marietta Times. She heard from a Gentile friend, another newspaper reporter, that he had surreptitiously observed the cross-burning and rally, and had been horrified to hear the Josephys' name brought up as a possible target for Klan harassment. His relief was mixed with other emotions when the focus shifted to the more sizable Catholic community in the area (many of whom were immigrants).[15]

The Klan in the Marietta area grew to about 300 members in 1925 before gradually losing influence. Though Klan belligerence was more smoke than fire, social antisemitism was a very real factor. In 1929, several of Joseph Josephy's friends nominated him for membership in the Rotary Club, in view of business success and civic invovlements. Josephy's nomination caused a fracas in the Club that all but resulted in a schism. So many of the members threatened to resign if a Jew – even one of thirty years' residence – was elected that the nomination was withdrawn. Many who had threatened resignation were prominent Methodist churchgoers (and, perhaps not so coincidentally, business rivals of Josephy). There is no doubt that some prominent Mariettans were involved with the Klan and that the Klan had strong ties with the Methodist Church. A

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Henderson, Kentucky. Henry Baldauf was reassured that his friend the local priest was keeping an eye on Klan activities (Arthur Baldauf, interview by Darrel Bigham, 1974 [University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives]).

[15] Register-Leader, February 26, 1923; author interview with Helen Josephy Robeson z"l, White Plains, NY, 1977.

connection with the Rotary incident, while not direct or provable, is certainly not inconceivable.[16]

But even in the 1920s, antisemitism did not on the whole derail American Jews' progress and integration. One measure of this progress was evident in the addresses given at dedication services for the new temple in Portsmouth, in January 1925. In a striking contrast to the experience of the first synagogue dedication in 1864, this time the local Catholic priest lauded the unity of "Protestants, Catholics and Jews" displayed in the ceremony. "No people so much as the chosen people of God are this day doing the will of God by breaking down the walls of social, religious and class prejudice," Father McQuirk declared. "Here, in Portsmouth, you can live your individual and family life as you wish, as long as the rights of God and those of your fellow-citizens are respected . . . . Over this temple floats the Stars and Stripes and back of all this is the spirit of justice and kindness of the whole American people."[17]

Despite this progress and apparent good will, there were some trouble spots in Jewish life in the Ohio River Valley in the 1920s and 1930s. The Depression was a serious challenge to the stability of many American synagogues and churches, regardless

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[16] Allen Rupp, "A History of the Marietta Rotary Club," Marietta, 1970, 31. For confirmation of the relationship of the Klan and the Methodist Church, see for example a story in the Marietta Times of February 26, 1923. On the Sunday evening after the cross-burning, Klansmen appeared in regalia at the Methodist Church as evening services began. With a flourish, they handed the visiting evangelist an envelope containing a cash contribution and a letter praising his work. The minister replied "that he knew not the purpose of the visit, yet he presumed it was for good, as he had similar experiences with the Klan in other places, and for a few minutes he addressed the Klansmen and the audience on the meaning of real Americanism." The reaction of the Methodist congregation was not recorded in the local newspapers. But the Times editorial on the incident, in the same issue, was silent on the issue of Klan bigotry, stating only, "There is no real work for such an organization to do here. There is no difficulty in securing convictions in our courts when evidence of misdoing is obtainable." For the role and ethos of Rotary in a slightly larger Midwestern town in the 1920s, see Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 301-6.

[17] "Fitting Excercises [sic] Mark the Dedication of the New Temple," Portsmouth Daily Times, January 5, 1925.

of their size and location, but it was especially difficult for small institutions. The Depression almost killed East Liverpool's B'nai Israel, which struggled to cover the mortgage on its building. The congregation in Portsmouth survived through some great good luck: a donation in 1929 of $10,000 from a former Portsmouth family who had become wealthy in clothing manufacture and retail.[18]

Some communities, especially in the lower Valley, lost Jewish population. Owensboro and Henderson, Kentucky, both went from over 200 Jews in 1917 to under 100 by 1937. In some places, the pull of the nearby metropolis was strong: Jews from New Albany, Indiana, moved across the river to Louisville, and those in Covington and Newport, Kentucky, to Cincinnati. The small synagogue in Madison, Indiana, closed its doors in 1923, the one in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, in 1935, and the one in Moundsville, West Virginia, in 1937. Cairo experienced hard times in the mid-1920s, though the congregation was able to reorganize in the 1930s, and in 1938, acquired a residence that was remodeled for community use.[19]

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[18] Re East Liverpool: Congregation B'nai Israel, Minute Book 1927-1935 (SC-1513, AJA). Trying to figure out how to pay the temple's bills almost completely preoccupied the board, to the point of ritual obsession. Minutes for August 17, 1933, noted that "Due to absence of the Treasurer, the reading of unpaid bills was omitted." Re Portsmouth: Congregation Bene Abraham Minute Book (AJA), June 7, 1929. The donors were Nathan, Charles and Henry Richman of Cleveland. Their business, Richman Brothers, was founded in Portsmouth. It later acquired the Anderson-Little chain before itself being acquired by Woolworth in 1969, though there were still some stores with the Richman name in late 1990s (research provided by Anne Mintz, Forbes Inc.).

[19] Re Madison: Personal conversation with Elizabeth Weinberg, January 14, 2002. Members of the Kronenberg and Hoffstadt families remained in Madison for over a century; a third generation Hoffstadt (a single woman) died in the family home in 1986 at age 93 (Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Visitor's Tour, Madison, Indiana's Jewish Community, 1849-1923," Indiana Jewish History 23 [April 1988], 8). Re Mt. Vernon: Congregation Ansche Israel Constitution and Minutes 1839[sic] -1981 (Microfilm 816, AJA). This film includes records of the local Jewish cemetery, ergo the extended date range. Re Moundsville: Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 1082, 1357. Re Cairo: Works Progress Administration, Historical Records Survey, 1936 (SC-206, AJA). Form is dated 1936 but information is from 1938 or 1939.

Neither the dramatic nature of the Depression nor, for that matter, the virtual cessation of Jewish immigration in 1924 should distract from the fact that movements that eventuated in this demographic decline was already well underway. In Marietta, the decline of the local oil economy accelerated the move of the Latvian families to the oil centers of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, from the 1910s through the 1930s. By 1935 the Jewish population was half what it had been a decade earlier. By late 1938, the congregation numbered only eleven men, barely more than the minimum required by Orthodoxy for public worship. Some Bellaire Jews who had also gotten their starts in the scrap metal business during the turn-of-the-century oil boom also followed the industry west in the 1920s, though there were still over 100 families in the late 1940s.[20]

For those towns that remained stable or grew during and after the 1930s, the loss of older population was to an extent offset by a new sort of Jewish migration. In 1938, one sociologist, looking specifically at Ohio, optimistically predicted a shift in Jewish population away from urban areas where high concentrations of professionals meant more competition. "The movement of Jewish professional men toward smaller

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[20] Re Marietta: Interview with Lela Gae Beren Jacoby, Encino, CA, August 28, 1997; minutes of Congregation Binae Israel, December 29, 1938. These minutes are recorded in English and Yiddish on facing pages. The English improved considerably in thirty years!

Shortly after Sarah Rabinowitz's wedding to Bernard Revel, the Marietta Register-Leader reported that her brother Sam had gone to Oklahoma to "attend to business matters for the American Iron and Supply Company" (June 30, 1909). There the family began to use the name Travis, explained as an Anglicization of Dreyfus, supposedly an old family name. The Rabinowitz-Travises were wealthy enough to provide substantial support for the young couple and for Revel's projects. He in turn worked intermittently as a consultant for the business (Aaron Rothkoff, Bernard Revel [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972], 41). For more about the Travis' involvement with Yeshiva University, see Gilbert Klaperman, The Story of Yeshiva University (New York: Macmillan, 1969), Jeffrey Gurock, The Men and Women of Yeshiva: Higher Education, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), and Gurock, "An Orthodox Conspiracy: The Travis Family, Bernard Revel, and the Jewish Theological Seminary," Modern Judaism 19:3 (1999), 241-53.

Re Bellaire: Personal communication, Dr. Jules Duga, Columbus, Ohio, July 31, 1994. There are many resources about immigration restriction in the 1920s. A classic treatment is John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 300-30.

communities," this sociologist observed, "means that younger men have begun to seek places which have a shortage of practitioners and where their services are needed. In so doing they are at the same time establishing a trend of significance for Jewish life as a whole. These men are perhaps more likely to succeed than their Jewish colleagues of the same age and experience in the larger cities." Whether this movement would have become a significant demographic trend, will forever remain a question mooted by the intervention of World War II. However, this pre-war pattern of new Jewish settlement in small towns adumbrated the pattern of the post-war period. The families of Jewish doctors, dentists, and college professors, as well as some businesspeople, filled some of the loss of the older generation of Jewish businessmen.[21]

For almost all the small Jewish communities of the Ohio River Valley, the 1950s was decade of change and challenge. At the same time as formal congregational affiliation was increasing in all American religions, the demographic base of small town Jewish communities was eroding. The increase in formal affiliation (and the baby boom which helped drive it) may have masked this decline for a while. Both the changing role of the American small town and the changing profile of American Jewry contributed, ultimately, to this decline.[22]

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[21] Lee Levinger, "Jews in the Liberal Professions in Ohio," Jewish Social Studies 2:4 (October 1940), 434. In anticipation of moves to small towns, B'nai B'rith even prepared a guide for young men considering such relocation: Robert Shosteck, "Small-Town Jewry Tell Their [sic] Story: A Survey of B'nai B'rith Membership in Small Communities in the United States and Canada" (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Vocational Service Bureau, 1953).

[22] Compare the declining small towns (those whose Jewish population fell below 100 in the early twentieth century) surveyed by Lee Shai Weissbach in "Decline in an Age of Expansion: Disappearing Jewish Communities in the Era of Mass Migration," American Jewish Archives 49:1-2 (1997), 39-61. Half of the towns that experienced this population decline between 1878 and 1907 lost their congregations by 1930; all

A significant feature of post-World War II American Judaism was the growth of Conservative Judaism. Throughout the country, both newly-organized and formerly Orthodox congregations moved in large numbers into the camp of a more modern traditionalism: between 1945 and 1965, United Synagogue grew from 350 to 800 congregations, with 269 joining in the years 1955-1961 alone. This influx included B'nai Jacob of East Liverpool, B'nai Israel of Steubenville, Adath Israel of Evansville, Synagogue of Israel of Wheeling, and Beth Israel of Huntington. The appeal of Conservative Judaism to the laity was largely social, rather than ideological; they were more interested in an Americanized style of Judaism, acceptable to the younger generation, than in the particular philosophy of Jewish legal interpretation on which the Conservative movement was founded. In the words of one lay leader, Conservatism was "the solution" because it was "more tasteful to our modern American life, yet not forgetting the fundamentals, the traditions and the ideals of Judaism." In other words, it was not old-fashioned, like Orthodoxy, but not too Protestantized, like Reform.[23]

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but one lost them by 1960. Of the towns that declined between 1907 and 1927, two-thirds lost their congregations by 1960 and all but one of the remainder (Owensboro) by 1990.

[23] Re Steubenville: "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," Steubenville, 1977, 12. Re Evansville: Gus Cohen, interview with Darrel Bigham, 1982 (University of Southern Indiana Special Collections/University Archives). Adath Israel was functionally the successor to B'nai Moshe. Re Wheeling: Synagogue of Israel had in the early 1940s absorbed the members of the disbanded downtown congregation Ohev Sholem ("Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling, prepared by L. Good, 1989," SC-12958, AJA). Re Huntington: B'nai Israel was described in 1959 as "much more Conservative" than Orthodox: for example, it had mixed seating. In the early 1960s, it changed its affiliation from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations to the United Synagogue (Conservative) (Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 878, 937, 917). United Synagogue statistics from Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," in Wertheimer, ed., The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1987), 123; quote re "tastefulness" from same, 118. A basic history of the movement is Neil Gillman, Conservative Judaism: The New Century (New York: Behrman House, 1993).

The minutes of East Liverpool's B'nai Jacob from the early 1950s illustrate how one of the most troubling issues for congregations transitioning to Conservatism was the question of women's participation. Over the course of several years in the late 1940s and early 1950s, motions were made at board meetings to admit women as members on their own behalf, with independent voting rights. The motions were consistently defeated, which is remarkable because almost every other motion ever made was passed. It

Steubenville's trajectory was typical. During the 1940s, B'nai Israel, like many Orthodox congregations throughout the country, began to experience shifts in its members' attitudes. Late Friday night services (in addition to early ones) were introduced in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Liturgical changes were initiated by the lay board, which directed its president to "'meet with the Rabbi and discuss new methods of conducting services. It should be suggested that a few innovations be made, as the members feel that a translation of the important prayers is worth trying.'" The president promoted other changes as well, including English responsive readings and mixed seating.[24]

The latter innovation was the most controversial, but as in many congregations, the people voted with their feet. Despite the absence of formal approval, men and women began to sit together at the High Holidays in 1947. Within months, the congregation formally affiliated with the Conservative movement. Religious "modernization" was accompanied by the modernization of the synagogue building, which was enlarged and remodeled. In 1952, Janet Glick became B'nai Israel's first official Bat Mitzvah, and by at least the mid-1950's, women were serving on the board.[25]

In many ways, life for small town Jews in the 1950s and 1960s was similar to that of their predecessors a century earlier. They maintained links with other Jewish

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would seem that meetings revolved around a consensus so that motions were pro forma; there was clearly no consensus on the women's issue (B'nai Jacob record book, 1946-1956).

[24] "Golden Anniversary Jubilee, Congregation B'nai Israel, 1902-1952"; "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," Steubenville, 1977 (quote from 1950s on 11). Late Friday evening services were started as a way to get people into the synagogue at a more "convenient" time for them (after work and dinner, when one would ordinarily go out, e.g., to the theatre). See Wertheimer, The American Synagogue, 130.

[25] "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," Steubenville, 1977, 12-14. When the Steubenville synagogue was "modernized," the architectural grace and historical integrity of the original building was completely destroyed. See photos in "Golden Anniversary Jubilee, Congregation B'nai Israel, 1902-1952".

communities through business and family relations and through institutions like regional Federations, B'nai B'rith, and the Reform movement's National Federation of Temple Youth. At the same time, the post-World War II prominence of religious ecumenism and of the "community relations" movement helped maintain a comfortable – even "patriotic" – context for Jewish integration. For example, in 1949, the East Liverpool Ministerial Association made a considerable adjustment for the sake of including B'nai Jacob's rabbi; since the rabbi did not eat out, the association agreed to have its annual dinner at the synagogue and pay for all to have kosher food. Jews continued to be active in civic life. Huntington, West Virginia, and Ashland Kentucky had Jewish mayors in the twentieth century.[26]

Portsmouth, Ohio, seemed to be maintaining remarkable stability. In 1958, it celebrated its centennial, claiming the title of "the oldest reform congregation between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati." At the time of the centennial, almost one fourth of the congregation's fifty-eight families had been members since the nineteenth century, and another quarter had been members for at least fifty years. The congregational president was Louis Levi, grandson and namesake of the first president; another member, Sylvan Lehman, was also a grandson of a founder, Simon Lehman. The congregation's secure place among the city's institutions was underscored by the huge number of local businesses that subscribed to a centennial tribute page in the Portsmouth Times; the page

[26] For ecumenism and general religious atmosphere, see Robert S. Ellwood, The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997) and The Sixties Spiritual Awakening (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994). For community relations movement, see Stuart Svonkin, Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew (New York: Doubleday, 1955) is the classic analysis of American society's "three great faiths." Re East Liverpool: B'nai Jacob record book, 1946-1956. Re mayors: Ashland: Clyde Levi and David Aronberg (1940s and 1950s) (The Daily Independent, Religion Supplement [December 6, 1994], 30). Huntington: Harry Frankel (late 1950s) (Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry, 917).

was sponsored by "patriotic individuals and institutions interested in building a better community in which to live." It would have been a dream-come-true for the nineteenth-century founders.[27]

But all the goodwill in the world could not stop the demographic decline. Casualties of the mid-twentieth century included Reform congregations in Bellaire, in 1953, Henderson, Kentucky, in the early 1960s; and the Orthodox congregations in Covington and Newport, Kentucky, in the mid-1960s.[28]

Another ominous development was a surge of congregational mergers. As Jewish populations continued to shrink, difficulties of religious difference between Reform and Conservative were eclipsed by economic exigencies. Mergers of Reform and Conservative congregations took place in East Liverpool in 1963, in Huntington in 1973, in Wheeling in 1974, and in Evansville and Steubenville in 1980.[29]

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[27] Portsmouth Times (October 13, 1958) 16. Actually, Beneh Abraham is the oldest on the north side of the river; the Reform congregation in Wheeling is older. Re Levi: "Congregation Beneh Abraham 100th Anniversary 1858-1958" (AJA)1, 9. Henry Atlas had been the first of four generations in Portsmouth; eventually the B'nai B'rith Lodge was named for him.

Portsmouth's proximity to Cincinnati also made it a top choice of HUC students looking for student pulpits. Among Beneh Abraham's student rabbis were Solomon Freehof (1914-15), an important Reform thinker; Jacob Rothschild (1935), a central figure in the civil rights struggle in his permanent pulpit of Atlanta; Isaiah Zeldin (1944), a leading rabbi of Los Angeles' post-World War II growth; HUC scholar Eugene Mihaly (1948); and communal leader Balfour Brickner (1951) ("Congregation Beneh Abraham 100th Anniversary 1858-1958," Nearprint File – Portsmouth, AJA).

[28] Re Bellaire: "Brief histories of all synagogues in the city of Wheeling [WV], prepared by L. Good, 1989," SC-12958, AJA. Re Henderson, Covington, and Newport: Lee Shai Weissbach, Synagogues of Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 120, 155. Covington and Newport suffered from a blight of organized – including Jewish – crime. (Hank Messick's Syndicate Wife [Covington: For the Love of Books, 1968] describes these vividly). Old-timers like to tell the story that when $1000 was needed to repair the synagogue roof, members, in an inventive fundraising move, went to the gambling establishments and collected the entire amount in half an hour from Jewish gamblers visiting from Cleveland and Detroit ("The Jewish Community of Northern Kentucky: A Brief History," Northern Kentucky Jewish Family Reunion File, AJA).

[29] One can see acknowledgement of both past and future in the names of the new entities. Some new congregations combined the two old names: in Steubenville, Beth El and B'nai Israel became Beth Israel; in Evansville, Adath Israel and B'nai Israel became Adath B'nai Israel. Wheeling and East Liverpool chose Temple Shalom and Huntington chose B'nai Shalom, names that are both hopeful and prescriptive.

The decline of these communities was gradual, but inexorable. Steubenville is a stark example. Beth Israel (Conservative) grew from 110 families in the mid-1940s to about 150 in the late 1940s and mid-1950s. Its demographics were young: 74 children enrolled in the synagogue school in 1955, and 71 in 1961. In 1949, Temple Beth El (Reform) had 125 members, and the Sunday School enrolled more than 50 children. By 1961, there were 90 children in school, and in 1966, a new temple was built in a suburban area of the city. But in the 1950s, Steubenville's population began to slip, taking Jewish population with it. A proposal to merge the two congregations was first raised in 1959 and continued to appear at intervals thereafter. By 1970, the city's overall population was down 6% from thirty years earlier, but in the following decade, the rate of decline doubled, to 12%. The two congregations' Sunday school programs were merged on a trial basis in 1972-73, but later separated for what one member of the Conservative group called "religious and social reasons."[30]

By 1976, B'nai Israel's membership had fallen to under 100 families, and many of these consisted of only one or two elderly people. The following year, the congregational historian pointed out how in 1968 the board had worried that only 37 children were enrolled in Hebrew school. Now, nine years later, mourned the writer, "we would happily settle for that amount." The congregation experienced difficulty hiring and retaining rabbis. The synagogue's downtown location was increasingly unappealing. By the late 1970's, membership had sunk to under 40, with no children. Beth El also faced difficulties. In 1970, the congregation had fewer than 100 families, and the number

[30] "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976," Steubenville, 1977, 14-21; "Temple Beth El Silver Anniversary, 1924-1949"; "A Salute to Our Past Presidents: 20th Anniversary of Temple Building, November 21, 1986." Population statistics for Jefferson County, provided by Steubenville Public Library.

of school children was dwindling quickly. In 1976, the last full-time rabbi left, and reportedly "his family's relocation left one child in the Sunday School."[31]

Facing what seemed inevitable, the congregations merged in 1980, forming a new entity named Beth Israel. One can read the anxiety about the future in the words of B'nai Israel's Rabbi Joseph Freedman, in submitting the merger agreement to his congregation. Freedman commends the communal unity and combination of "the best of two great traditions of our Jewish Faith" which would result from the union. But most of all, he hoped, it would enable the preservation of "a distinctive Jewish life that will stem the erosion that confronts us by Assimilation of Non-Jewish Values." There is a hint of desperation in his suggestion that "positive action now will save for us and future generations the best of our traditional Jewish Way of Life."[32]

The mergers highlighted the erosion of many differences among Jews in the small towns since the East European immigration. In East Liverpool, for example, relations between the Orthodox and Reform communities – which were of more or less equal size – had long been cordial but cautious. Some East Europeans felt strongly that the Reform were uppity and assimilated; to this day, one refers to them disparagingly as the "Deitschen." Social interaction increased over the years as the differences between the two communities, primarily economic, lessened. As long as Orthodox families lived in the East End and Reform families in the West End, their children would attend different elementary schools, but over the years, residential segregation lessened. Gradually there

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[31] "History of Congregation B'nai Israel to 1976." Steubenville, 1977, 18, 23-24; "A Salute to Our Past Presidents: 20th Anniversary of Temple Building, November 21, 1986," 13-14. Also, personal communication from Jerome Endich, Steubenville, November 4, 1994.

[32] Preamble to Merger Agreement, dated January 8, 1980, photocopy from Temple Beth Israel files, courtesy of Rabbi Kenneth Milhander, February 18, 1997.

was social crossover between the two congregations, and eventually some membership crossover as well, especially after B'nai Jacob become Conservative. B'nai Jacob invited both the Reform rabbi and the temple president to the installation of their new rabbi in 1948, "in order to promote better feeling in the Jewish community." The temple also invited the synagogue members to events such as confirmation.[33]

As each community struggled through the 1950s, merger seemed increasingly attractive. When the merger vote was finally taken in 1962, both congregations were virtually unanimous. At B'nai Israel, there were only two abstentions and no negative votes; at B'nai Jacob, only two negatives. At the organizational level, the deal was a life-saver for those East Liverpool Jews committed to continued Jewish life. Each old congregation contributed approximately half of the members of the new congregation, hopefully named Beth Shalom. In 1965 they took the optimistic step of hiring Sydney Fisher of Lima as full-time rabbi. There were about a dozen children in the Hebrew school.[34]

The new congregations almost unanimously affiliated with the UAHC, which historically had much more experience with small congregations. In many cases, the groups seemed to use a merger agreement template supplied by the UAHC that was designed to give some room for traditional sensibilities, splitting most of the difference between Reform and Conservative practice. For instance, the Torah would be read both Friday night and Saturday morning; *tallit* and *kippa* were optional for the congregation, but encouraged on the *bimah* and encouraged (or even expected) of the rabbi. Holidays

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[33] B'nai Jacob record book, 1946-1956; interview with Alvin Fineman, Chester, WV, November 1994.

[34] B'nai Israel meeting minutes, 1950-62; B'nai Jacob meeting minutes, 1957-62; Beth Shalom Trustees meeting minutes, 1964-69.

would be observed both by the Jewish calendar and, if desired, on nearby dates as well; second day Rosh Hashanah services and Bar/Bat Mitzvah (either Friday evening or Saturday morning) would be made available. In deference to the Conservatives, some version of *kashrut* was accepted, and smoking was prohibited on Shabbat and holidays. In deference to the Reform, an organ and a choir were permitted, though perhaps not at all services. Mergers built in power-sharing. Assets, including real estate, were pooled. Political power was balanced by both groups providing equal representation to the new congregation's board and committees for two years.[35]

While the fact of mergers indicates a lessening of differences, these carefully constructed agreements highlight the remaining issues, and no mere document could truly deal with the free-floating group and personal jealousies and anxieties released by the changes in congregational identity. After Rosh Hashanah 1966, East Liverpool's Dr. Alex Fisher analyzed the problem in a letter to the incumbent president concerning comments on the services. "Some were complimentary and some were critical . . . ." Fisher noted. "Some thought the rabbi was too 'orthodox.' Some thought there was not

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[35] Articles of Merger, Temple Shalom (Congregation L'Shem Shomayim), Wheeling, provided from congregational files by Rabbi Daniel Lowy, March 4, 1997; Merger Agreement, dated January 8, 1980, photocopy from Temple Beth Israel (Steubenville) files, courtesy of Rabbi Kenneth Milhander, February 18, 1997; Constitution, Regulations and By-Laws of Congregation Beth Shalom [East Liverpool], draft (1963). In East Liverpool, the Reform temple became the home of the new congregation, with the sale of B'nai Jacob's properties provided substantial funds (Beth Shalom Trustees meeting minutes, 1964-69). The downtown building of Steubenville's Conservative congregation was sold, but its windows and plaques moved to the Reform temple building (Merger Agreement, 1997).

Huntington, for historical reasons, has remained with both the UAHC and United Synagogue. However, in all functional respects, the congregation is Reform (conversation with Betty Sue Feuer of the Ohio Valley Region office of USCJ, August 18, 1994). The same is true of Adat B'nai Israel of Evansville. These dual affiliations are still in place as of 2002, per both USCJ and UAHC websites, though technically it should be impossible because of several critical unreconcilable ideological differences, especially with respect to patrilineality. Feuer couldn't explain it.

The Reform practice of celebrating Jewish holidays not on their date but on the nearest weekend was (and is) fairly widespread. Neither Michael Meyer (Response to Modernity) nor Silverstein (Alternatives to Assimilation) mention it in their histories of the movement.

enough English in the service. Some felt that there was too much talking in the audience. Some thought the services were too long . . . . [P]ersonally, I felt that many of these complaints were not offered with a completely unbiased feeling. I'm afraid that there are still many from both former congregations who do not realize that there absolutely must be some give and take. And until this does become a willing reality, I'm afraid there will not be the unity that we all who are really interested in Beth Shalom hope to see." The first student rabbi to serve the merged congregation was profoundly impressed with how hard people worked to make the merger a success. Yet it was, he remembers, a poignant moment, fatalistic rather than optimistic. Over the years, the press of compromise and the thinning out of the community made the differences of the 1960s irrelevant.[36]

Despite the popularity of mergers, in some towns, a tenacious traditionalist contingent held on to a formal identity until folding. In Ashland, Kentucky, Orthodox congregation House of Israel, formed in the 1920s when Agudath Achim moved toward Reform, closed down in 1976. The realignment of American industry, especially steel, in the 1970s and 1980s had a strong impact on the towns of the upper Ohio River Valley, which went into decline as the immigrant generation was dying. Traditional synagogues – Orthodox in name, but Conservative in practice – closed in Bellaire in 1986 and in Weirton in the early 1990s. Marietta's Orthodox congregation became inactive in the 1970s, as the first generation died or retired to new locations and the second generation settled elsewhere after college. The Berens transferred the principal base of operations of their OKMAR ("Oklahoma" – "Marietta") oil and gas company to Wichita and Denver.

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[36] Letter from Fisher: Beth Shalom Trustees meeting minutes, 1964-69; Conversation with former student rabbi, Rabbi Richard Levy, November 10, 1996. Steubenville's agreement required that *bimah* honors on the first High Holidays were to be divided equally between the groups to minimize potential jealousies ("A Salute to Our Past Presidents: 20th Anniversary of Temple Building, November 21, 1986").

The last rabbi left around 1960. The remaining Latvian families and several other East European Orthodox families retained a communal structure, however, and were close socially. One of these "new" families was the Yabloks, who arrived in the early 1940s, purchasing the junk business that had formerly belonged to several other Jewish families. The property for this business included the shell of what was once the fine red brick house of Isaac Hertz Rabinowitz.[37]

The remnants of Congregation Binae Israel were aware that their era had passed and made plans for dissolution on their own terms. Among the concerns dealt with at a meeting in spring of 1972, was the fact that membership had fallen below the minimum number specified in the congregational charter: "Important! Consideration about transfer or disposition or trusteeship of assets of schul to be effected before State has right to step in. Consult lawyer. How many members does it take or what number is minimum required to constitute a congregation. (Include women.)" At the time, there were only eight members (now, by necessity, including the women), all elderly, some of whom now lived only part-time in Marietta. The mortgage on the Fourth Street synagogue building had been paid off in the late 1930s. Now arrangements were made for a local bank to pay the bills to maintain it.[38]

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[37] Re Ashland: The Daily Independent, Religion Supplement (December 6, 1994). The Reform congregation was able to hang on for another decade; it folded, and sold its building, in 1987 (Ashland Sunday Independent, August 17, 1986). Re Bellaire: Brief history of the Sons of Israel Congregation, by Laurance F. Good, 1989, SC-823, AJA. In 1945, Agudas Achim had approached Sons of Israel about a merger. At this point, Agudas Achim seems to have been essentially Conservative, but differences with Sons of Israel were too great to overcome. Re Weirton: Conversation with Irwin Bogarad, February 25, 1996. Re Marietta: Interview with Lela Gae Beren Jacoby, Encino, CA, August 28, 1997. Sam Yablok, the junk man, was a colorful, cantankerous character whose salt-of-the-earth personality provided a strong contrast to the style of the college and business Jews. His personality leaps out of a front-page Marietta Times article written about him at the time he retired to Seattle in 1980 (August 16, 1980).

[38] Congregation Binae Israel Minutes, March 12, 1972.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Marietta's Jewish history is the exceptional cohesiveness and tenacity of the East European community. This insularity was compounded by the community's high degree of interrelatedness and by their durable Orthodoxy. For this group, the Marietta Jewish community was almost completely co-extensive with their own relatives. By maintaining the institutional structure of Congregation Binae Israel (of which they were the only members), the descendants maintained legal control of the synagogue building and the Jewish section of the Oak Grove Cemetery. Physical control was maintained by employees of the oil production company office in Marietta, directed by family members in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, and Colorado.

Even after minyanim were no longer meeting at the Fourth Street synagogue, the building was maintained by members of the Beren family. The sentimental connection was unbreakable. When he was in town, Adolph would do his morning prayers in the otherwise empty synagogue, rather than at home. In an obituary, he was quoted as saying, "It's a shul – it's so precious to me that I cannot leave it alone – the walls will cry." The Lithuanian Orthodoxy practiced in the Marietta synagogue in the early part of the century had been fixed permanently to the premises. The family/congregation resolutely refused use of the building to any non-Orthodox newcomers to Marietta, regardless of the conditions. It belonged to Lithuanian Orthodoxy, not to Marietta.[39]

The end of the era came with the death in December 1994 of the last living son of Wolfe Beren, who, shortly before his death, had returned to Marietta and directed the refurbishing of the synagogue. His funeral was held there, with a rabbi from Telshe

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[39] Beren obituary: Intermountain Jewish News (May 19, 1989), Section B, 1.

Yeshiva in Cleveland officiating. By January 1995, the only official members of the congregation were Adolph Beren's three children (none of whom lived any closer to Marietta than Wichita, Kansas), who paid for the costs of wrapping up congregational business. The prayerbooks and Torah scrolls had already been sent from Marietta to the Telshe Yeshiva. In 1997, the Yeshiva acquired the remaining assets: some religious objects, proceeds from the sale of the synagogue, and title to the Jewish section of the city cemetery.[40]

In northern Kentucky, too, the entrenched interests of an older generation closed the book on Jewish continuity. In the 1970s, a group of young Jewish suburbanites living in gentrifying areas of the northern Kentucky towns attempted to found a new Reform congregation. Knowing that they were not the first congregation in Covington, the new group wished to connect with the past by creating themselves as the successor to Temple of Israel, even calling the new entity Temple Israel. Leaders approached long-time resident Abe Wander, the nominal president of the old congregation, about the possibility of inheriting the 1939 synagogue. "Under the impression that Mr. Wander would allow them to sell the building and use the proceeds to relocate in a nicer, safer neighborhood," a local historian reported, "the group . . . sought out a prospective buyer." But Wander – who was effectively, even legally, **the** congregation – sold the building to a fundamentalist Protestant church and sent the proceeds to Orthodox charities in Israel rather than permit their acquisition by a liberal Jewish group.[41]

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[40] Re synagogue: Congregation Binae Israel Minutes, January 12, 1995; correspondence from Robert Beren, Wichita, KS, June 25, 1997. Re cemetery: information provided by John Hadley, Hadley Funeral Home, Marietta, January 2002. The Cleveland yeshiva is the successor to the pre-war European entity, which was the spiritual and intellectual center of Lithuanian Orthodoxy.

[41] Leslie Lassetter, "The Story of Covington's Schule, The Temple of Israel," Nearprint File, AJA, 23-25.

In the Upper Ohio Valley, just west of Pittsburgh, one small community has experienced a remarkable turn-around in the past fifteen years. The industrial small towns of Western Pennsylvania had long been economic colonies of Pittsburgh. In Jewish life too, these towns were part of the Pittsburgh orbit through business, social and family contacts. As the city's suburbs expanded and Jews flocked to them, Ambridge was the beneficiary – rather than the victim – of new demographic trends in American Jewish life.[42]

Hemmed in by the rivers, the city of Pittsburgh first expanded eastward, while the towns on the opposite banks remained fairly autonomous. This was also the direction of the first Jewish residential movements away from older city neighborhoods beginning in the late nineteenth century. By the start of the twentieth century, the city was also reaching northwest, along the Ohio, towards towns such as Sewickley. However, many of these towns resisted and manipulated development to preserve their semi-rural character. Sewickley slowly transformed from an upper-class rural retreat in the mid-nineteenth century to an upper-class suburb in the late nineteenth. Not surprisingly, upwardly-mobile Jews tended to avoid these towns in the northern or western suburbs, which were seen as exclusive and inhospitable to Jews. A local historian estimated that in the 1920s perhaps as few as a dozen Jews lived in suburban Bellevue, Avalon, or Ben Avon, on the Ohio. Because of this residential sparseness, there were no synagogues at

[42] Edward Muller, "Metropolis and Region: A Framework for Enquiry Into Western Pennsylvania," in Samuel P. Hays, ed., City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 181-211; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 194.

all in the North Hills area. The few Jews who moved into Sewickley in the 1950s were swimming in distinctly inhospitable waters.[43]

Meanwhile, the small industrial towns such as Corapolis, Aliquippa, and Ambridge went into decline. They had grown rapidly from the late nineteenth century until immigration restriction in 1924, and experienced modest growth until the 1940s, when it leveled off. In Ambridge, for instance, Jews constituted a high percentage of the business owners in what was, through the mid-1960s, still a booming steel town. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as foreign competition and industry restructuring took its toll on the steel industry, Ambridge's Jewish merchants, many of them ready for retirement anyway, began to sell out, or, if unable to find any buyer at all, simply closed their businesses. Ambridge's town center had more and more boarded-up shop windows.[44]

Ambridge's Congregation Beth Samuel followed this downward trajectory. In the mid-1950s, there were about 100 families in the congregation, with about 70 children in the school. In the early 1970s, a merger with the Aliquippa shul (itself a merger of two earlier Orthodox groups) brought in enough people to sustain the membership level. In the early 1980s, some twenty families joined after the Coraopolis congregation disbanded, but continued population decline seemed inevitable.[45]

In the mid-1980s, though, the decline was reversed with the move of young Jewish families into – ironically – the formerly restricted exurban haven of Sewickley. Sewickley Hospital, a major regional medical center, attracted young Jewish doctors and

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[43] Muller, "Metropolis and Region," 200-4; Feldman, Jewish Experience in Western Pennsylvania, 185-86; conversation with Lou Zell, Ambridge, PA, June 15, 1995.

[44] Conversation with Lou Zell, Ambridge, PA, June 15, 1995.

[45] Conversation with Lou Zell, Ambridge, PA, June 15, 1995.

administrators who wanted to live near their workplace. Though some new residents commute to larger congregations in Pittsburgh, others joined the smaller nearby community. Over 100 families now belong to Beth Samuel, which now affiliates with the liberal Reconstructionist movement. Few members actually live in Ambridge; others come from Aliquippa, Coraopolis, and Beaver, and even from the suburban Pittsburgh neighborhood of North Hills. But the majority comes from the exurban areas of Sewickley, Moon Township, and even farther out in (less expensive) Beaver County. The synagogue's website advertises itself as "Proudly Serving Pittsburgh's Northern and Western Suburbs."

Beth Samuel has profited from its central location, and through a double process of consolidation of small towns and new settlement, has regained its earlier maximum numbers and anticipates further growth. The shift in constituency has inevitably produced conflict, some of which, as in any congregation, is age- and class-based. A high proportion of new residents are physicians and other professionals; the older residents were businesspeople. Parents of young children, who constitute the largest subset in the congregation, have different needs and priorities than retired members. However, there is also a dynamic resulting from different perceptions of the community. The old-timers view themselves as small-town Jews, residents of their own town; the newer residents consider themselves suburbanites. Older residents fear that their identity will be submerged in the city, whereas the new residents, most not natives of the city or region, celebrate and enjoy the proximity. The tug between autonomy and attachment continues.[46]

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[46] Information re revival of Beth Samuel: conversation with Rabbi Shalom Bell, June 19, 1995; correspondence from Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky, January 25, 2002. Rabbi Bell lived in Sewickley; Rabbi

In some larger towns of the Ohio River Valley, congregations are still functioning. In Evansville (which, with a 2000 population of over 120,000, is distinctly a city), Temple Adath B'nai Israel recently experienced some decline in membership: from about 220 in the late 1980s to under 200 in 1995, but with a current membership of 155 members, it maintains a full-time rabbi, and a full menu of activities. As Wheeling's economy declined and its Jewish population aged, Temple Shalom's membership fell from 150 families in 1976 to about 100 in 1997, and religious school enrollment fell from 85 to 25. "It is no comfort to know it, but what is going on in Wheeling is going [on] in all small towns around the Pittsburgh area," wrote Rabbi Daniel Lowy in 1997. "We have hoped for a change," he continued, "but there seems to be none in sight." However, the congregation seems to have stabilized at about 100 members and still has a full-time rabbi and many programs and services, including a "traditional" Saturday morning minyan. Huntington has 130 members, but as of this writing, no rabbi.[47]

Steubenville is doing less well. The city has continued to lose population; the county has higher than national average unemployment and the highest average age in the state of Ohio. Membership in Temple Beth Israel reflects the demographic reality, declining from about 90 in 1994 (sixty families and thirty single men and women, mostly

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Kaminsky lives in Ambridge. The synagogue's website is www.bethsamuel.org. By contrast to the relationship of Pittsburgh and its western suburbs, the Northern Kentucky towns are being left farther behind by Jewish suburbanization in Cincinnati, which proceeded north away from the central city and the Ohio River.

[47] All current membership figures (2002) from Robin Riback, Small Congregations Dept., UAHC, New York, conversation with author, January 2002. Increasingly, many of these member families are elderly couples or singles. For Evansville: 1995 figures supplied by Rabbi Arthur J. Abrams, October 23, 1995; see also the temple's website (http//members.evansville.net/tabi/tabi.html). The current rabbi, David Feder, recently married an Evansville woman whose parents and grandparents still live in the city. For Wheeling: Personal correspondence from Rabbi Daniel Lowy, March 4, 1997; also Temple Shalom website, http://uahc.org/congs/wv/wv003.

widowed) to 68 in 2002. Lay leaders alternated with a student rabbi from HUC until the fall of 1995 when a full-time rabbi was hired; however, there is now no rabbi.[48]

The smallest, most isolated congregations are smaller than ever. Paducah reports thirty-five members, Parkersburg thirty, East Liverpool twenty, and Owensboro only fifteen. One source of vitality is Hebrew Union College's program of pulpit placements for student rabbis, which keeps Jews in isolated communities directly and personally connected to new ideas and developments in the Jewish institutional world and in the Reform movement, including the ordination of women as rabbis. A source of stability for the isolated communities is their buildings. East Liverpool Jews still maintain the 1926 structure. In Paducah, the ornate 1890s synagogue was razed for a parking lot in 1963 and a smaller building erected on the outskirts of town. (A downtown location was no longer an important status statement in a small town.) In Owensboro, a small, generally elderly group meets monthly and on High Holidays with "para-rabbinic" leadership trained by the UAHC. The 1877 Moorish-style synagogue – "one of Kentucky's most unusual architectural landmarks" – is one of fewer than fifty extant nineteenth-century synagogues in the United States and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.[49]

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[48] Abstract of demographic data on Jefferson County, provided by Steubenville Public Library; personal communication from Jerome Endich, Steubenville, OH, November 4, 1994.

[49] Membership figures (2002) from UAHC. Re Paducah: Weissbach, Synagogues of Kentucky, 155-57. Re Owensboro: Lee Shai Weissbach, "Bearing Witness," Kentucky Humanities, Winter 1994, 3; congregation's website, http://uahc.org/congs/ky/ky004/. Attempting to explain the weakness of Jewish life in Owensboro today, Weissbach hypothesizes that although the city currently has a substantial population, the small size of the pre-World War II Jewish community discouraged chain migration and other Jewish settlement (personal correspondence with author, March 2002). The student rabbi system can also be a source of disruption, especially since young Reform rabbis are on average far more traditionally observant than their elders. Most small congregations seem to be quite open to women rabbis, and not only because they are grateful to have anyone. In 1994-1995, East Liverpool's bi-weekly rabbi was a sixty-one year-old Holocaust survivor, Helga Newmark, who was greatly appreciated.

B'nai Abraham of Portsmouth, like Owensboro's Adath Israel a charter member of the UAHC, now has only twenty registered members. The 1958 centennial may have been the high point of the congregation's history. By the 1970s, the fifty-year-old synagogue at Eighth and Gay Streets was still in fine condition, but too large for the congregation, which now numbered 42 member units. When approached by an Assemblies of God church looking for an appropriate site, the time seemed ripe. For the amount received from the sale, the congregation erected – mortgage-free – a new temple, small, modern, and more efficient, on a wooded lot at the edge of town.[50]

By the time of the dedication of the new, smaller building, social stability had turned into stagnation. Of the 42 members in 1975, only 6 had not been members at the time of the centennial in 1958. In seventeen years, the net loss (22 members) was almost 40%. Lehmans and Levis were still on the roster. In 1975, the great-grandson of founding president Louis Levi, Bernard, was president. By the 1980s, when Bernard Levi retired to Florida, five generations of the family had lived in Portsmouth for over 130 years. Even in the 1990s, third generation Portsmouth Jews were not uncommon. Paul Warsaw is the third generation to run his family business, Lewis Furniture. Members of the Jacobs family still run a local scrapyard; recent changes in American attitudes have finally made their line of business – recycling – a prestigious activity.[51]

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[50] Membership figures (2002) from UAHC. "New Temple Dedication," Congregation Beneh Abraham, April 25, 1975, Nearprint File, AJA.

[51] "New Temple Dedication," Congregation Beneh Abraham, April 25, 1975 (Nearprint File, AJA); "Ex-Members Return for Temple Centennial Rites," Portsmouth Times (November 3, 1958), 14; Conversations with Francesca Stead and Susan Warsaw of Portsmouth, and Bernard Levi of Boca Raton, FL, August 1994. Bernard Levi's father has also been temple president, during the centennial in 1958. Mike Mearan is third generation in Ironton, though he practices law and participates in the congregation in Portsmouth (Letter from Mearan to author, May 24, 1994).

But Portsmouth's prospects are not bright. Poverty engulfs over one-fourth of the county's adult population and one-third of its children, a rate more than double the Ohio state average. A good economic indicator is when unemployment hits "only" eight percent. Tourism cannot compensate for the economic debilitation. The Cincinnati Enquirer has referred to Portsmouth as "pretty but poor" and a "crack in the world 108 miles from Cincinnati." It has been a long time since the day when another Cincinnatian, Isaac Mayer Wise, praised Portsmouth's Jews as "wide awake for their religion."[52]

[52] "Upstart Dueling a Daily," The Cincinnati Enquirer (July 30, 1995), Section G, 1-3.

# EPILOGUE

For many small Jewish communities in recent years, the most pressing question has been how to die with dignity. The closing of a synagogue is very difficult emotionally. When the Reform synagogue in Ashland, Kentucky, closed in 1986, members described the experience as a "trauma." The temple building was a statement of belonging, a physical symbol of American Judaism's parity with Christianity; the decision to close had been delayed as long as possible, one man explained, because "we didn't want to lose our identity in the community." There was grudging recognition of intermarriage and assimilation – another grumbled that "There are some people in Ashland of Jewish extraction who could belong, but don't." The trustees of the congregation optimistically invested the proceeds of the sale, "in case, miraculously, enough Jewish people moved here to start another congregation."[1]

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[1] Ashland Sunday Independent, August 17, 1986; The Daily Independent, Religion Supplement, December 6, 1994.

The required miracle might not be as fantastic as it once seemed. Demographers have noted a small reversal in the decline of American small towns: in the 1990s, rural counties experienced a net gain of two million residents, versus a net loss of one and a half million in the 1980s. Some of the towns of the Ohio River Valley may be beneficiaries. Newport, Kentucky, with a surge of gentrification in its neighborhoods of Victorian houses, is becoming a middle-class bedroom community for Cincinnati. The "dying downtowns" of the 1970s are now rehabbed as quaint living and shopping spaces in towns like Lawrenceburg and Madison, Indiana, and Marietta, Ohio. But they are hardly boom towns.[2]

In fact, this mobility has been quite selective. As early as the 1980s, the Reform movement noticed that the move of Jewish professionals to new areas of employment in small southern cities was rejuvenating those congregations. In addition to choosing small towns for economic reasons (recently, of course, for professional rather than business opportunities), most Jews – like most other Americans – who choose this route are looking for a certain less stressful "lifestyle" and stronger sense of community. As one Jewish Mariettan said, it is "the American dream to live a peaceful life in a small town."[3]

Whether this new dispersion to small towns will continue is up for debate. Today migration is "the major dynamic" in a Jewish community's growth or decline, but the selectivity of migration shows regional variations that will almost certainly fail to benefit

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[2] "The Great Escape," Time (December 8, 1997), 54. Re Newport: New York Times (January 16, 2000), Section Y, 41. Re Lawrenceburg: New York Times (November 7, 1999), Section Y, 48. Re Madison: Robert M. Taylor, Jr., ed., Indiana: A New Historical Guide (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989), 123.

[3] "Movement of Jews into Small Cities Puts New Life into Congregations," Jewish Week, July 13, 1984 (clipping in Nearprint file, Small Town Jews, AJA); Evelyn Pitasky, "The Jewish Community: Marietta, Ohio (1970-1980)," unpublished paper, Marietta College, 1983, [1-2].

the Ohio River Valley. For one thing, "both higher rates of dispersion and continued growth [are] associated with urbanization and metropolitanization." Dispersion has not meant a revival of small towns. In 1957, about 4% of American Jews lived in towns of fewer than 50,000 people; by 1983, less than 2% did so. In 1990, only 5% lived outside central cities or their suburbs. Dispersion has simply meant that Jews now live in a greater number of metropolitan areas around the country.[4]

It is unlikely that these congregations will ever again experience the communal vibrancy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the demise of Ashland's congregation helped seed another, as they donated a *sefer Torah*, *ner tamid* and *siddurim* to a new congregation in Iowa; one of the Iowans had grown up in Ashland. Another metaphor of the demographic transformation of American Jewry, the *ner tamid* from the Weirton temple ended up, like many northern Jews, in the Sunbelt: the lamp now hangs in the new Arizona synagogue of a Weirton native.[5]

With their best days now past, some small Jewish communities seem to serve their dispersed former residents in much the same way the Lower East Side has served the broader American Jewish imagination, as a mythic "old country" remembered for its closeness, warmth, and supportiveness. In the case of the northern Kentucky towns,

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[4] Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 48-49, 309 (quote on 48); Thomas Goldwasser, "Jews in Small Towns," Baltimore Sun, March 23, 1983 (clipping in Nearprint file, Small Town Jews, AJA). The importance of mobility holds true for all Jewish communities, not just the smallest ones, the Goldsteins point out; it is the result of "virtual zero population growth" in the American Jewish population. The Goldsteins believe that even an economic boom is no panacea, that some boom towns do not attract Jews if there is not already a strong Jewish base (22).

[5] Re Ashland: Correspondence from Marty Weill, Ironton, OH, March 1994. Re Weirton: Conversation with Irwin Bogarad, February 25, 1996.

proximity to the old hometown – and the intensity of the migration to the urban center – enabled a considerable continuity of community, as people who lived there from the 1930s through the 1950s transplanted their old friendship networks into new settings. Some of these networks endured for years after leaving Kentucky. In October 1994, 200 people met at a Cincinnati hotel for a "Northern Kentucky Jewish Family Reunion." Organizers had tracked down hundreds of descendants of former Newport and Covington families: the program book for the event listed nearly 500 individuals and couples, of whom almost 400 lived in the Cincinnati area. Many of the attendees were people in their 80s, born as the community was being born and growing up with it. They spoke of their feelings about the community with unwitting irony – overlooking the fact that urbanization both destroyed their closeness and fostered the construction of their new sense of community.[6]

So do "small towns make good Jews," as Israeli journalist Ze'ev Chafets asserts? One things is clear: it is not at all obvious that small town Jewish life leads, or has in the past led, to higher levels of intermarriage and assimilation. In earlier generations, intermarriage was inhibited by social factors: the mutual reluctance of Gentiles and Jews to consider each other as marriage partners, an attitude reinforced by greater parental control of courtship and marriage. Where intermarriage did take place, it was often in an urban context of class or cultural aspirations; it was not for a lack of viable options for inmarriage. Small-town Jewish communities dwindled through out-migration, not

[6] Program book, "Celebration of the Century: Northern Kentucky Jewish Families," Sunday, October 9, 1994; personal correspondence from Rita Goldhoff, Cincinnati, October 1994. For the mythic role of the Lower East Side, see Hasia Diner, Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

through out-marriage; the meteoric rise of the intermarriage rate since the 1960s has in fact coincided with increased Jewish urbanization.[7]

An evaluation of the small-town experience is a complicated matter. The feelings of individual Jews who have actually lived in small communities are mixed. It is easy to avoid one's Jewishness in a small town, and in many cases, a decision to live there is possible because Judaism is not a high priority for the individual. But Jews who embrace their Jewishness will find ways to do so, even when it requires more effort.[8]

There is no question that in some aspects, small town Jewish identity is very different from the urban version. Small-town Jews are perforce ambassadors of the Jewish people to the overwhelmingly non-Jewish majority, but this is a function of percentages rather than locale. They are less insulated from Gentile ignorance. Likewise, though there is no evidence that small towns are more antisemitic, Jews there

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[7] Ze'ev Chafets, Members of the Tribe: On the Road in Jewish America (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 93. On the history of intermarriage in the American Jewish experience, see Paul and Rachel Cowan's admittedly limited survey in Mixed Blessings: Overcoming the Stumbling Blocks in an Interfaith Marriage (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 63-126. Anne C. Rose's recent book Beloved Strangers: Interfaith Families in Nineteenth Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), which looks at both Jewish-Christian and Protestant-Catholic intermarriages, puts intermarriage in the context of changing American culture. Rose is primarily interested in attitudes about intermarriage, that is, how these families and others viewed the phenomenon. She is less interested in intermarriage as an historical phenomenon – her goal was to "describe thoughts and feelings," not to "chart quantifiable trends" (12) – so the analysis of changing religious and familial values gets short shrift.

It is important to remember that even in the nineteenth century, some American rabbis did perform intermarriages (Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988], 290). For example, in 1893, Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago married Marcus Sulzer of Madison, Indiana, to Lida Griffith, whose father was a Baptist minister in Vevay, Indiana (Elizabeth Weinberg, "Families and Personalities," typescript, 1998 [SC-14470, AJA], 8). In this case, the couple's children were raised observing some of both religions, though at least one eventually chose Christianity. But it would be interesting to study whether small Jewish communities were ahead of their urban counterparts in the integration of non-Jewish and converted spouses, as suggested (in 1967) by a Reform rabbi serving in Huntington (Rabbi Lawrence Kaplan – Papers, etc., American Jewish Archives).

[8] A good example is the Conference on Judaism in Rural New England, which brings together "Jews in the woods" from northern New England and lower Canada at an annual conference, through a newsletter, and with travelling "para-rabbis."

cannot be as insulated from it as urban Jews and have to develop personal means of coping.[9]

Many small-town Jews are very positive about the experience. Elizabeth Weinberg of Madison argues that the experience of small town Jews, integrating with the majority while maintaining their Jewishness, demonstrates to "American Jews living in the modern ghettos" how exaggerated are their fears for Jewish survival. Joyce Rubin, who grew up in Cairo in the 1950s and early 1960s considers the context of her upbringing "very realistic." In other words, she felt the (necessary) small-town Jewish emphasis on intergroup relations and understanding other religions was more in tune with the requirements of life in America's pluralistic democracy than was the intense Jewish social and cultural life of heavily Jewish urban neighborhoods. Elsa Rubin Efran, who grew up in East Liverpool in the 1940s and 1950s, expressed a similar sense of integration and parity, reinforced by a social familiarity created by the proximity of all classes in the small town. "Our family had friends of all religions and many walks of life -- from blue-collar to professional," she remembers. " . . . We went to church dinners, and non-Jews came to Temple dinners. These were **community** events, not religious events." Non-Jewish neighbors would meet the student rabbis at the Rubins' home, and

[9] For examples of responses to antisemitism, see memoirs in Howard Epstein, ed., Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies (Santa Rosa, CA: Vision Books International, 1997): Herschel Rubin (b. 1916) re East Liverpool (539); Geraldine Stregevsky (b. 1921) re Bellaire (540-542); and Margy Kleinerman (b. mid-1920s) re Midland (581). Stregevsky remembers antisemitism in tiny Shadyside, where they moved when she was seven. Some of this may have been a resentment of her family's wealth, which was perhaps less of an issue in Bellaire (her grandfather was Sam Kapner, who owned the Bellaire enamel works, 539-540). Also conversation with Bernard Levi, Boca Raton, FL (formerly of Portsmouth), August 21, 1994; conversation with Florence Weinstein, formerly of Portsmouth, OH, June 28, 1995. The "ambassador" role is not unfamiliar to the present writer. We had to fill the same role in Oklahoma City, where Jews are one-quarter of one percent of the metropolitan population (2500 in 1 million), which is the equivalent of 50 Jews in a town of 20,000 – about the same as many of the Ohio River Valley examples here.

also "brought their priests and ministers over. . . . Occasionally I went to church services with my friends, and they came to Temple with me."[10]

On the other hand, the small town experience was not for everyone. One complaint is the perceived fish-bowl environment of a small town, the feeling of living in "a little Peyton Place," where gossip is the major social activity. Some express regret that they did not grow up in a larger Jewish community, especially given the issue of inter-dating. Some, upon reflection, began to resent what they perceived as excessive accommodations to Christian sensibilities. Some were positively traumatized by the experience.[11]

Some enjoyed their small-town Jewishness specifically because of its uniqueness. Young Jews might feel that their Jewish world was more cosmopolitan, that through their Jewish contacts outside the small town, they were more sophisticated than their Christian peers. Writer Julie Salamon, who grew up in a small inland Adams County, Ohio, town, relished being exotic, not only as a Jew among small-town Christians, but as a small-town Jew among urban Jews. "I often mention my upbringing in this 'colorful' impoverished backwater to let people know I'm not just another Jewish girl from New York," she admits bemusedly. "I have watched myself deliberately bring my parents into

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[10] Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio -- A History of Madison, Indiana's Jews," Indiana Jewish History 27 (July 1991), 3; interview with Joyce Rubin, Los Angeles, March 25, 1997; memoir by Elsa R. Efran in Epstein, Jews in Small Towns, 493.

[11] "'Born-Again' Jew Still Fighting Anti-Semitism," Los Angeles Times (July 28, 1986). The subject is Burton Levinson, then newly-appointed national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League. He had moved from Pittsburgh to Ironton as an 11-year-old in the early 1940s. His memories contrast sharply with the experience of, for instance, Marty and Evelyn Weill; Evelyn was a native, who brought Marty to town after their marriage (copy of letter from Weill to Gerald Kraft, president of B'nai B'rith International, August 4, 1986). Levinson experienced bigotry and generalized to the whole; a newcomer, adolescent, and a city kid, he was crushed by his inability to fit in. The Weills, on the other hand, were ready, like most small-town Jewish residents, to dismiss bigotry as an aberration and look at the bright side of backhandedly negative statements. Perhaps they could do this because they already **knew** they belonged. Also: conversation with Steve Weinstein, formerly of Portsmouth, June 1995; conversation with Bernard Levi, August 21, 1994.

conversation, often as comic foils for amusing stories about the adventures of eastern European Jews [her parents were Holocaust survivors] in the American heartland."[12]

If, as Jacob Marcus said, it is impossible to find the first Jew anywhere (there's always someone more "first"), it is probably equally impossible to identify the absolutely last Jew anywhere. For many reasons, American Jews live in many places, and despite the death of institutions and the fragility of "community," American Jews as individuals may carry a spark of Judaism to all these places. Recently, scholars Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen have described how American Jews carry their identity within themselves, how today Jewishness is what it needs to be for any Jew at any given moment.[13] I think of the girl in my sister's seventh grade class who discovered that her absentee father, divorced when she was a toddler, was Jewish; she then announced that she would not attend school on Hanukkah. I wonder what happened to that girl. She was, of course, mistaken that Jewish practice required her abstention, and clearly all her knowledge of Judaism was filtered through an entirely American lens. But that identification set off something in her, and who knows where Jews will continue to be found and what it will mean to American Judaism.

Jews first came to the Ohio River Valley at a particular time in its history, which set many of the conditions for – and limits to – the growth of their communities. As ambient conditions changed over almost two centuries, so did the configuration of Jewish

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[12] Conversation with Steve Weinstein, June 1995; conversation with Marion Weinberg Redner z"l, Newton, MA, formerly of Martins Ferry, OH, March 1995; Julie Salamon, The Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place (New York: Random House, 1996), 6.

[13] The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

life. Remembering that community is both physical place and human relationship, we can accept and expect that change will continue. Even as perpetual "flow, flux, transformation has given the Ohio River and its basin a paradoxical – but somehow abiding – sense of place," continued transformation of the Jewish people paradoxically anchors it in an abiding sense of history.

COUNTY AND TOWN
POPULATIONS 1900-2000
(selected years)

| | | 1900 (1) | 1930 | 1950 | 1970 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PENNSYLVANIA | | | | | | |
| Allegheny | | 775,058 | 1,374,410 | 1,515,237 | 1,605,016 | 1,281,666 |
| (Pittsburgh) | | 321,616 | 669,817 | 676,806 | 520,117 | 334,563 |
| Beaver | | 56,432 | 149,062 | 175,192 | 208,418 | 181,412 |
| (Ambridge) | (2) | nl | 20,227 | 16,429 | 11,324 | 7,769 |
| (Aliquippa) | (3) | 620 | 27,116 | 26,132 | 22,277 | 11,734 |
| | | | | | | |
| OHIO | | | | | | |
| Columbiana | | 68,590 | 86,484 | 98,920 | 108,310 | 112,075 |
| (East Liverpool) | | 16,485 | 23,329 | 24,217 | 20,020 | 13,089 |
| Jefferson | | 44,357 | 88,307 | 96,495 | 96,193 | 73,894 |
| (Steubenville) | | 14,349 | 35,422 | 35,872 | 30,771 | 19,015 |
| Belmont | | 60,875 | 94,719 | 87,740 | 80,917 | 70,226 |
| (Bellaire) | | 9,912 | 13,327 | 19,573 | 9,655 | 4,892 |
| Washington | | 48,245 | 42,437 | 44,407 | 57,160 | 63,251 |
| (Marietta) | | 13,348 | 14,285 | 16,006 | 16,861 | 14,515 |
| Meigs | | 28,620 | 23,961 | 23,227 | 19,799 | 23,072 |
| (Pomeroy) | | 4,639 | 3,563 | 3,656 | 2,672 | 1,966 |
| Gallia | | 27,918 | 23,050 | 24,910 | 25,239 | 31,069 |
| (Gallipolis) | | 5,432 | 7,106 | 7,871 | 7,490 | 4,180 |
| Lawrence | | 39,534 | 44,541 | 49,115 | 56,868 | 62,319 |
| (Ironton) | | 11,868 | 16,621 | 16,333 | 15,030 | 11,211 |
| Scioto | | 40,981 | 81,221 | 82,910 | 76,951 | 79,195 |
| (Portsmouth) | | 17,870 | 42,560 | 36,798 | 27,633 | 20,909 |
| Hamilton | | 409,479 | 589,356 | 723,952 | 924,018 | 845,303 |
| (Cincinnati) | | 325,902 | 451,160 | 503,998 | 452,524 | 331,285 |
| | | | | | | |
| INDIANA | | | | | | |
| Dearborn | | 22,194 | 21,056 | 25,141 | 29,430 | 46,109 |
| (Lawrenceburg) | | 4,362 | 4,072 | 4,806 | 4,636 | 4,685 |
| Jefferson | | 22,913 | 19,182 | 21,613 | 27,006 | 31,705 |
| (Madison) | | 7,835 | 6,530 | 7,506 | 13,081 | 12,004 |
| Floyd | | 30,118 | 34,655 | 43,955 | 55,622 | 70,823 |
| (New Albany) | | 20,628 | 25,819 | 29,346 | 38,402 | 37,603 |
| Vanderburgh | | 71,769 | 113,320 | 160,422 | 168,772 | 171,922 |
| (Evansville) | | 59,007 | 102,249 | 128,636 | 138,764 | 121,582 |
| Posey | | 22,333 | 17,853 | 19,818 | 21,740 | 27,061 |
| (Mt. Vernon) | | 5,132 | 5,035 | 6,150 | 6,770 | 7,478 |
| | | | | | | |

COUNTY AND TOWN
POPULATIONS 1900-2000
(selected years)

| | | 1900 (1) | 1930 | 1950 | 1970 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |
| ILLINOIS | | | | | | |
| Alexander | | 19,384 | 22,542 | 20,316 | 12,015 | 9,590 |
| (Cairo) | | 12,566 | 13,532 | 12123 | 6,277 | 3,632 |
| | | | | | | |
| WEST VIRGINIA | | | | | | |
| Brooke | (4) | 7,219 | 24,663 | 26,904 | 29,685 | 25,447 |
| Hancock | (4) | 6,693 | 28,511 | 34,388 | 39,749 | 32,667 |
| (Weirton) | (5) | nl | nl | 24,005 | 27,131 | 20,411 |
| Ohio | | 48,024 | 72,077 | 71,672 | 64,197 | 47,427 |
| (Wheeling) | | 38,878 | 61,659 | 58,891 | 48,188 | 31,419 |
| Wood | | 34,452 | 56,521 | 66,540 | 86,818 | 87,986 |
| (Parkersburg) | | 11,703 | 29,623 | 29,684 | 44,208 | 33,099 |
| Cabell | | 29,252 | 90,786 | 108,035 | 106,918 | 96,784 |
| (Huntington) | | 11,923 | 75,572 | 86,353 | 74,315 | 51,475 |
| | | | | | | |
| KENTUCKY | | | | | | |
| Boyd | | 18,834 | 43,849 | 49,949 | 52,376 | 49,752 |
| (Ashland) | | 6,800 | 29,074 | 31,131 | 29,245 | 21,981 |
| Mason | | 20,446 | 18,862 | 18,486 | 17,273 | 16,800 |
| (Maysville) | | 6,423 | 6,557 | 8,632 | 7,411 | 8,993 |
| Kenton | | 63,591 | 93,534 | 104,254 | 129,440 | 151,464 |
| (Covington) | | 42,938 | 65,252 | 64,452 | 52,535 | 43,370 |
| Campbell | | 54,223 | 73,391 | 76,196 | 88,501 | 88,616 |
| (Newport) | | 28,301 | 29,744 | 31,044 | 25,998 | 17,048 |
| Jefferson | | 232,549 | 355,350 | 484,615 | 695,055 | 693,604 |
| (Louisville) | | 204,731 | 307,745 | 369,129 | 361,472 | 256,231 |
| Daviess | | 38,667 | 43,779 | 57,241 | 79,486 | 91,545 |
| (Owensboro) | | 13,189 | 22,765 | 33,651 | 50,329 | 54,067 |
| Henderson | | 32,907 | 26,295 | 30,715 | 36,031 | 44,829 |
| (Henderson) | | 10,272 | 11,668 | 16,837 | 22,976 | 27,373 |
| McCracken | | 28,733 | 46,271 | 49,137 | 58,281 | 65,514 |
| (Paducah) | | 19,446 | 33,541 | 32,828 | 31,627 | 26,307 |
| | | | | | | |

NOTES FOR TABLE: COUNTY AND TOWN POPULATIONS 1900-2000

nl = not listed

(1) Data for 1900 appear also in previous table.

(2) Ambridge was first listed in the 1910 census, with a population of 5,205. The population in 1920 was 12,730.

(3) Aliquippa was first listed in the 1900 census. The population in 1910 was 1,743, and in 1920 was 2,931.

(4) Weirton city overlaps Brooke and Hancock Counties.

(5) In its early decades, Weirton was an unincorporated entity. The population was about 8,500 in 1930 and about 18,000 in 1940 (West Virginia: A Guide to the Mountain State, compiled by the Writers' program of the Works Progress Administration [New York: Oxford University Press, 1941], 483). Only a section of the city, Weirton Heights, is listed in the 1940 census, with a population of 2,476.

County data from: US Census Bureau, County Population Census Counts 1900-1990
(http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/cencounts.html)

Year 2000 data from U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder
(http://factfinder.census.gov/)

All other data from printed census volumes

PENNSYLVANIA TOWNS
JEWISH POPULATION
ESTIMATES

| | Aliquippa | Ambridge | Beaver | Coraopolis | McKee's Rocks | Midland | Rochester | Pittsburgh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1852 | | | | | | | | some |
| 1858 | | | | | | | | 60 |
| 1863 | | | | | | | | 150 |
| 1870 | | | | | | | | 1,000 |
| 1878 | | | | | | | 21 | 2,000 |
| 1889 | | | | | | | | 5,000 |
| 1897 | | | | | | | | 10,000 |
| 1905 | | | | | | | | 15,000 |
| 1912 (1) | some | | some | | 200 | | some | 35,000 |
| 1917 (2) | 300 | | | | 220 | 94 | | 60,000 |
| 1927 | 115 | 200 | | 200 | 240 | | 62 | 53,000 |
| 1937 | 410 | 290 | 30 | 180 | 330 | 100 | 100 | 52,000 |
| 1947 (3) | 400 | 300 | | 156 | 260 | | | 54,000 |
| 1953 (4) | 400 | 300 | | 152 | 160 | | | 54,000 |
| 1960 | 400 | 300 | | 115 | 100 | | | 47,000 |
| 1967 (5) | 400 | 300 | 115 | | | | | 45,000 |
| 1978 (7) | 400 | 250 | 115 | | | | | |
| 1980 | 400 | 250 | 115 | | | | | 50,000 |
| 1984 | 400 | 250 | | | | | | 50,000 |
| 1991 (9) | 350 | | | | | | | |
| 1999 (10) | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | 40,000 |

* included with Pittsburgh

OHIO TOWNS
JEWISH POPULATION
ESTIMATES

| | E. Liverpool | Steubenville | Bellaire | Marietta | Pomeroy | Gallipolis | Ironton | Portsmouth | Cincinnati |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1820 | | | | | | | | | 20 |
| 1830 | | | | | | | | | 140 |
| 1840 | | | | | | | | | 1,250 |
| 1850 | | | | | | | | | 2,500 |
| 1860 | | | | | | | | | 9,000 |
| 1878 | | 37 | 64 | | | | 47 | 84 | 8,000 |
| 1905 | | | 140 | | | | some | 96 | 17,500 |
| 1907 (1) | | 200 | 300 | | some | | some | 114 | 25,000 |
| 1912 (1) | some | 150 | 400 | some | some | | some | 60 | 28,000 |
| 1917 (2) | 300 | 400 | 440 | 80 | | | 90 | 128 | 25,000 |
| 1927 | 500 | 920 | 300 | 100 | | | | 200 | 23,500 |
| 1937 | 535 | 1000 | 275 | 80 | | 14 | 55 | 175 | 21,800 |
| 1947 (3) | 368 | 780 | 256 | <100 | | | <100 | 140 | 22,000 |
| 1953 (4) | 365 | 1000 | 200 | | | | | 120 | 25,000 |
| 1960 | 365 | 900 | 120 | | | | | 200 | 25,000 |
| 1968 | 290 | 620 | 120 | | | | | 170 | 28,000 |
| 1974 (6) | 290 | 620 | 120 | | | | | 120 | 30,000 |
| 1978 (7) | 290 | 405 | <100 | | | | | 120 | 30,000 |
| 1985 (8) | 300 | 200 | | | | | | 120 | 22,000 |
| 1991 (9) | 200 | 175 | | | | | | <100 | 23,000 |
| 1999 (10) | <100 | 125 | | | | | | | 22,500 |

INDIANA/ILLINOIS TOWNS
JEWISH POPULATION
ESTIMATES

| | Lawrenceburg | Madison | New Albany | Evansville | Mt. Vernon | | Cairo |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1878 | 36 | 253 | | 375 | 86 | | 57 |
| 1905 | | | | 800 | 123 | | |
| 1907 (1) | | 50 | | 750 | | | 150 |
| 1912 (2) | | 32 | | 1000 | | | |
| 1917 (2) | | 70 | 125 | 1500 | 85 | | 375 |
| 1927 | | 24 | | 1800 | | | 75 |
| 1937 | 50 | 15 | 65* | 1765 | 23 | | 60 |
| 1947 (3) | | | | 1350 | | | |
| 1953 (4) | | | | 1450 | | | |
| 1960 | | | | 1225 | | | |
| 1967 (5) | | | | 1125 | | | |
| 1978 (7) | | | | 1200 | | | |
| 1980 | | | | 1200 | | | |
| 1985 (8) | | | | 1200 | | | |
| 1991 (9) | | | | 520 | | | |
| 1999 (10) | | | | 400 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| * Plus 25 in Jeffersonville (opposite Louisville) | | | | | | | |

WEST VIRGINIA TOWNS
JEWISH POPULATION
ESTIMATES

| | Wheeling | Weirton | Parkersburg | Huntington |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1854 | 17 | | | |
| 1878 | 300 | | 77 | |
| 1905 | 400 | | 150 | 71 |
| 1907 (1) | 550 | | 50 | 100 |
| 1912 (1) | 500 | | 400 | 150 |
| 1917 (2) | 1000 | 69 | 440 | 310 |
| 1927 | 750 | | 98 | 1125 |
| 1937 * | 1150 | | 125 | 810 |
| 1947 (3) | 800 | 300 | 100 | 700 |
| 1954 (4) | 800 | 300 | 100 | 700 |
| 1960 | 800 | 265 | 100 | 925 |
| 1967 (6) | 700 | 300 | 170 | 750 |
| 1974 (7) | 775 | | 170 | 350 |
| 1978 (8) | 650 | | 155 | 350 |
| 1980 | 650 | 150 | 155 | 450 |
| 1985 (9) | 650 | 150 | 155 | 450 |
| 1991 (10) | 300 | <100 | | 275 |
| 1999 (11) | 275 | | 110 | 250 |
| | | | | |
| * Plus 25 in Chester, 35 in Wellsburg, | | | | |
| 16 in Moundsville and 15 in New Martinsville. | | | | |

KENTUCKY TOWNS
JEWISH POPULATION
ESTIMATES

| | Ashland | Maysville | Covington/ Newport * | Louisville | Owensboro | Henderson | Paducah |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1830 | | | | 20 | | | |
| 1860 | | | | 2000 | | | |
| 1875 | | | | | | | 170 |
| 1878 | | 18 | | 2500 | 213 | 79 | 203 |
| 1905 | | | | 7000 | 155 | 189 | 234 |
| 1907 (1) | | | | 8000 | | 150 | 260 |
| 1912 (1) | some | | some | 10000 | | 250 | 250 |
| 1917 (2) | | | 650 | 9000 | 230 | 275 | 250 |
| 1927 | 170 | | 1100 | 12500 | 49 | 93 | 800 |
| 1937 | 150 | 28 | 850 | 13800 | 65 | 88 | 600 |
| 1947 (3) | 200 | | | 9000 | | 140 | 150 |
| 1953 (4) | 175 | | | 7900 | 125 | 140 | 150 |
| 1960 | 175 | | | 8500 | | 140 | 275 |
| 1967 | 150 | | | 8500 | | | 175 |
| 1974 (7) | 150 | | | 9200 | | | 175 |
| 1978 (8) | | | | 9200 | | | 175 |
| 1980 | | | | 9200 | | | 175 |
| 1985 (9) | | | | 9200 | | | 175 |
| 1991 (10) | | | | 8700 | | | ** |
| 1999 (11) | | | 500 | 8700 | | | |

* 1917: Covington 350, Newport 300
1927: Covington 500, Newport 600
1937: Covington 350, Newport 475, Fort Thomas 25

** Included with all of Southern Illinois. Weissbach estimates 150 for 1994 (see Synagogues of Kentucky, p. 149).

## SOURCES OF JEWISH POPULATION DATA

Unless otherwise footnoted, all data are drawn from Jacob Rader Marcus, To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990).

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(5) American Jewish Yearbook 1961, v. 62, ed. Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961

(6) American Jewish Yearbook 1968, v. 69, ed. Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968

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