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# Yankees in Yarmulkes: Small-Town Jewish Life in Eastern Long Island

*Helene Gerard*

Written history, until recently, concerned itself not with ordinary people or events but with the country's leaders and their major political and economic decisions; interpretation of American history was made in major, sweeping concepts which often proved to be myths.<sup>1</sup> Although America was always a land of immigrants, one such myth maintained an idealized homogeneity of "the American people," which reached its zenith at the turn of the century, as Europe's huddled masses, reaching these shores, ostensibly emerged from the melting pot boiled down into amorphous "Americans."<sup>2</sup> This led to group stereotyping from which even the upper echelons of society did not escape, as indicated by the phrase coined by Ward McAllister in 1883, "the Four Hundred." That group was to be admired in awe and even emulated; others, such as "Radicals," were to be thrown out of the country, while "Papists" were to be feared. Jewish immigrants were seen as an urban, mercantile people, noted, even by sympathizers, for their "headlong hunt for wealth,"<sup>3</sup> living only in such self-created ghettos as New York's Lower East Side, Boston's North End, or Chicago's Maxwell Street.<sup>4</sup>

Today's social history encourages a different approach, emphasizing the individual and his daily, social, cultural, and religious life, all of which provide the underpinnings for yesterday's facts and figures. Such an approach finds Jews who settled outside the cities in the tobacco country of Virginia<sup>5</sup> and the mining towns of Colorado.<sup>6</sup> They were cattle dealers in upstate New York<sup>7</sup> or piloting ships for the Revenue Cutter Service along the Gulf Coast,<sup>8</sup> doing all manner of things beside shopkeeping, but shopkeeping as well,<sup>9</sup> and surviving as Jews.

This study is based on more than one hundred oral history interviews documented with other available materials.<sup>10</sup> The interviews were done in sixteen villages on eastern Long Island, including fishing



*Zelig Kaplan and family, Greenport, c. 1905*

(Courtesy of Helen Gerard)



*Sam Harding at the opening of his second store. Riverhead, 1926.*

(Courtesy of Helen Gerard)

and farming villages, factory towns, and commercial centers. It was thus possible to investigate many different types of communities which might be considered prototypes of similar villages throughout the country. The stories told and information gathered repeat, with variations on a theme, the experiences of those turn-of-the-century Jewish pioneers who chose to settle as individuals in areas which, even today, are not cities but have had Jews living there for one hundred years and more.<sup>11</sup>

Eastern Long Island was settled in 1640 by Englishmen who sailed from New England. Within the next 130 years, according to the dean of American Jewish studies, Jacob Rader Marcus, Long Island became "familiar country to New York colonial Jewry."<sup>12</sup> However, these earliest Jews left no permanent imprint.

For two hundred years after it was settled the area remained rural, with an economy based on agriculture and the water, separated from New York City by life-style as much as by the 120-plus actual miles.<sup>13</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, descendants of the original New England Yankees showed their prize produce at the County Fair held in Riverhead, the county seat, and the Grange promoted new farming methods of fertilizing and crop rotation.<sup>14</sup> Commerical fishing was an important occupation, and the shipbuilding industries of Setauket, Stony Brook, and Port Jefferson "made the names of the villages by-words in ports around the earth."<sup>15</sup> With the whaling era past, the deep-harbor ports of Sag Harbor and Greenport were now convenient stopovers for commerce traveling between Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston.

### *The Jewish Community of Breslau*

Between 1840 and 1870, German Jews arriving in America peddled their way out to bustling Long Island villages where some chose to settle.<sup>16</sup> Jewish families such as the Fishels in Riverhead and the Jaegers and Markels in Greenport arrived and still remain, but such families left no permanent Jewish mark, for they soon assimilated, usually through intermarriage.

However, by the 1870's, the German migration indirectly provided the location for a lasting Jewish settlement. The combination of a new railroad line and a German immigrant named Charles S. Schleier, who "had a great dream" of creating a place where other German immi-

grants could settle, as the impetus for the village of Breslau, formally dedicated on Pfcingst Monday, June 1, 1870.<sup>17</sup> It was in this same village, later named Lindenhurst, that ten men met at the home of Herman Rosenstein on November 23, 1874, to organize a Hebrew congregation called Neta Zarakh [Planting of Thy Seed], incorporated on January 19, 1875.<sup>18</sup> This was the first time that Jews, as Jews, struck roots in the fertile soil of Suffolk County.

By October 1876, the group had purchased a section of land from the Breslau Cemetery Association for a Jewish cemetery.<sup>19</sup> In 1887, ten men met again, this time to form a Hebrew Cemetery Association, with the name Jacob Rosenberg repeated from the original group<sup>20</sup> indicating that there was an ongoing Jewish settlement in Breslau after 1874.

Breslau provided a kosher oasis for Jewish peddlers who found their way that far out on Long Island. It was in Breslau that Robert Blumberg's grandfather, M. Friedman (named in the 1887 group), had a large house. According to Blumberg, "If they were religious and they landed, they came to my grandmother Friedman's house. She would put them up, keep them there, feed them." Blumberg goes on to explain that his father, a peddler, had come out to Breslau by train to do business in the surrounding villages. "So long as my father was religious, my grandmother made the *shituch* with her daughter right there and then. He married my mother about 1890."<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps because of its permanence, Breslau was always considered "a large community of Jews," though the numbers were never too large before 1912. The synagogue was not built until 1915, yet for years before that the community was the religious nucleus for isolated families in the surrounding villages of Babylon, Bay Shore, and Amityville. Belle Cedar Bernstein, now of Center Moriches, remembers: "As a little girl, five or six years old, on the Jewish holidays we walked from Amityville to Breslau. There were quite a few—well, I won't say quite a few. There may have been six to twelve Jewish families in Breslau then."<sup>22</sup>

### *Jewish Peddlers Open Up the East End*

After the 1880's, Breslau continued to be an important Jewish community when enormous waves of Eastern European immigration

reached America's shores. As with the Germans, although most of the Eastern Jews settled in urban centers, some took to the roads leading to the rural villages of eastern Long Island. For them, Breslau was a jumping-off point.

Sam Golden of Setauket tells of his father, thirteen-year-old Isaac, walking with a peddler's pack on his back from Jamaica to Setauket, approximately forty miles. On his way east, Isaac would stop in Breslau for a last hot, kosher meal, after which he subsisted on the hard-boiled eggs and cheese his mother had sent with him. This was a weekly round-trip walk for Isaac; he had to be back in New York with his family every Sabbath. His brother David started the route with him but had to stop; "He was too frail."<sup>23</sup>

Peddling was an incredibly demanding occupation. The pack itself has been described as enormous; it could have weighed close to two hundred pounds. Reaching above a man's head by at least a foot, on either side beyond his body to the same extent, and down to the tops of his thighs, it was two or more feet deep, made of striped mattress ticking, and filled with small, soft, unbreakable items—ribbons, shoelaces, needles, pins, and the like. Sometimes larger items, such as underwear, gloves, or yard goods, were carried, depending on how much profit could be realized. It could take hours to unpack, have a farmer's or bayman's wife sort through to choose her purchases, then repack. Then the peddler would stand the pack against a wall, back up to it, crouch down to fit his arms through the straps, pick it up, and walk off to his next stop. Often, he also carried two suitcases, one in each hand for balance.<sup>24</sup>

Peddlers walked from house to distant house, sometimes along roads, sometimes following the railroad tracks, in all kinds of weather. Miriam Glickman tells of her father, who, after some years, was able to afford a horse and wagon: "He went from Port Jefferson to Hauppauge, about fifteen miles. In those days Hauppauge was a mudhole. I remember he used to say the horse would put one foot in and the foot would get stuck. Or you'd get one wheel out and the other wheel would get stuck. It used to take him a week sometimes to go across."<sup>25</sup>

Youngsters as well as men in their twenties and thirties walked the hundreds of miles. Oscar Goldin's father, Nathan, was thirteen when the Blizzard of '88 caught him peddling in Eastport. He was on his way to Sag Harbor and across Shelter Island to Greenport, whence he

would walk back to New York along the North Shore, a total of about 250 miles.<sup>26</sup> Abe Brown's father was sixteen when he peddled by foot out to Greenport and decided to settle there. The area was thriving, and he wanted to raise money quickly to bring his wife and child from Russia.<sup>27</sup>

Harry Spodick, who was born in Sag Harbor in 1893, explains that his parents had come to America about 1880 as newlyweds fleeing Russia. His father Edel's skill as a brushmaker was not marketable in New York City. According to Spodick, a *lantsman* (a person from his father's village in Lithuania) with whom they were staying in New York, "said to him, 'Look, you got to make a living and you have no other trade. My advice to you is to become a peddler.'" This man helped him buy his small items, put them into two baskets which he carried, "and he picked Long Island as to be the place where he was going to start out peddling. They thought that might be good territory. There were a lot of the farmers out here who didn't have opportunities to get in very often to the stores."

Harry Spodick continued: "So he drifted down Long Island and eventually he landed out here. My father liked it. . . . There were a lot of Lithuanians became farmers in the Hamptons, and lo and behold, he met a few of them that came from . . . where he was born. So they became quite palsy-walsy."<sup>28</sup>

The story was repeated in one form or another, one town and another, for the next thirty years. In eastern Suffolk County, Jewish peddlers made their home bases in Patchogue, Center Moriches, Eastport, East Quogue, Southampton, Sag Harbor, Amagansett, and East Hampton. On the North Shore, they settled in Setauket, Riverhead, and Greenport.

The peddlers suffered not only physical hardships but other difficulties as well. Some farmers welcomed them and their wares, gladly trading overnight space in the barn for a pair of warm gloves; others set their dogs on these strange-looking foreigners who could barely speak English. Local storekeepers encouraged the passage of laws requiring fees for peddlers, in the hope of keeping out competition, and village toughs saw a good target in the peddler, who, although he was strong, couldn't fight back or run away by virtue of his burden.

The fact that most of the early Jewish peddlers were observant created additional problems. Lawrence Goldstein tells the story of his

uncle Levi, who was interrupted in laying *tefillin* by a farmer who, seeing Levi wrapping things around his head, thought he was about to hang himself.<sup>29</sup> This same Uncle Levi was, unwittingly, served shrimp for dinner by Charlotte Warner, a bayman's wife. According to her, she suddenly "heard this crunching and here he was eating the shells and all. And I said, 'No, Mr. Levi, you have to take the shells off. Didn't you never do it?' And he said, 'No.' " Apparently she was aware of some rules of *kashruth*, however, for she continued, "If there was pie on the table, he wouldn't eat it. He knew it was made with lard, see. He didn't eat meat. He would just eat eggs and potatoes, sometimes vegetables when I had them from my garden. He was very strict about his eating."<sup>30</sup> Usually carrying their own bread with them, the peddlers subsisted on milk, cheese, and other farm dairy products.

Slowly, a back peddler saved enough money to buy a horse and wagon, keep merchandise in the front room, and then buy a store. A wife, often brought from New York or Brooklyn, would supervise the merchandise as well as the home and children, while her husband still took to the road, peddling.

### *Factory Workers and Other New Arrivals*

The number of Jews who went to eastern Long Island as peddlers was small, but they paved the way for larger numbers who followed soon after to work in the "manufactories" which slowly started to dot the landscape. Although grist mills, fulling mills, and similar operations had been in existence since colonial days, the nineteenth century slowly brought industrialization to the East End. Progress took the form of woolen and cotton mills, large shipyards, brickyards, and comparatively good-sized factories.

In 1878 Robert S. Manning and Edwin and Joseph W. Elberson founded the Long Island Rubber Company of Setauket, raising \$138,150 from the sale of stock to local businessmen.<sup>31</sup> County records show the incorporation, in 1882, of the Fahys Watch Case Company in Sag Harbor with capital stock of \$100,000<sup>32</sup> and in 1890 of the American Lace Manufacturing Company in Patchogue with capital stock of \$120,000.<sup>33</sup> It was basically these three firms which brought large numbers of Jews to East End villages, though other, smaller firms, such as the Bellport Shirt Manufacturing Company<sup>34</sup>



and the Bellport Cigar Manufacturing Company,<sup>35</sup> contributed to the arrival of Jews in their area.

Factory owners wanted cheap labor; Europe's tired and poor, arriving on America's shores by the thousands each day, needed jobs. Advertisements in the many foreign-language newspapers published in New York City and factory recruiters posted at Ellis Island offered good jobs, living quarters, and clean country air. The immigrants responded.

Some newcomers never even entered New York City but came to eastern Long Island directly from Ellis Island to work in the factories, swelling population figures and radically changing ethnic statistics. In 1902, the *Sag Harbor Express* noted a recent census indicating a total population of 3,438. The article continued: "Our population is cosmopolitan . . . there are about 650 adults of foreign birth. . . . The Hebrew invasion, which is comparatively recent, sums up, men, women and children, about 500."<sup>36</sup> Some of the "invaders" had arrived from Ellis Island by steamer, to be greeted at the docks by townspeople crying, "Jerusalem is coming! Jerusalem is here!"<sup>37</sup>

In Setauket they got off the train speaking no English but with big tags pinned to their coats saying "Castle Garden." To carriage drivers meeting the train, this indicated that they were to be taken or directed to the boarding house of Elias Golden, father of the young peddler Isaac, who, since the family had moved to Setauket, now worked in Elbersen's rubber factory. By 1892, the rubber factory had brought almost one hundred Jewish families to Setauket. They were "so central to production that the Jewish High Holy Days were a time of general shutdown for the Setauket factory."<sup>38</sup>

In Patchogue, Daniel Davidow, a former peddler, had established a grocery store in town near the lace mill. His store was wellknown to both the factory salesmen and the owners, Einstein and Wolf, for all were welcomed to the back room for a cup of tea around the big round oak table. One of Davidow's sons, Isidore, states that through this relationship, "whenever any of these greenhorns, as we called them, came into my father's grocery and wanted a job, I went across the street, went into the office and got them a job at the lace mill."<sup>39</sup>

The Jews who came to eastern Long Island were not only peddlers and factory workers. In Sag Harbor, "Murphy the Jew," a hard-drinking, husky type, was a shoemaker. In Greenport, there were Jewish

fishermen, tailors, scallopers, cattle dealers, and horse dealers. In Patchogue, they followed some of the same occupations. There were also butchers, a saloon keeper, and even a vaudeville actor who claims that his act, which traveled all over the Long Island circuit, "never got the hook."<sup>40</sup> Setauket had its saloon keeper and farmer; in East Quogue there were three Jewish farmers, and in Calverton, another. In Center Moriches, a Jewish man, after "being fooled by everybody that he tried to buy something from," and being helped by a Catholic priest when his children were starving and he needed work, eventually established a duck farm which raised several hundred thousand ducks a year.<sup>41</sup> Other Jewish duck farmers operated in Riverhead. While many Jews were merchants, in general they did whatever there was to be done in order to make a living.

### *Formal Religious Life*

The original Jews followed the religious rituals individually. When ten men settled near enough to worship together, a *minyán*, or the beginning of a congregation, was formed. As in early Breslau, worship was usually held in a private home with the Torah kept in a front parlor closet and taken out for the occasion. Larger communities were the focal point for holiday as well as weekly Sabbath services, although Jews living in outlying areas usually traveled to these centers only on holidays. As Mary Brown Frank remembers it, "Pop would pick up all the men [visiting peddlers]. They left their packs by Momma, in the house. How many peddlers was in the house, he used to take them in his horse and wagon and drive all the way over from our farm in East Quogue to Riverhead. They'd stay there by Mrs. Goldberg. . . . They would go just for *yontif*, for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur."<sup>42</sup>

Formal religious life in the larger communities, of which there were five in eastern Suffolk County, can be traced through incorporation records, land deeds, and newspaper accounts, with details filled in through oral testimony. The three earliest formally established Jewish communities on Long Island's East End were in Setauket, Sag Harbor, and Greenport. Their Jewish residents built the first three synagogues and founded the first two Jewish cemeteries.

When Lazarus Seligson and Louis Rich met at the home of Aaron Grodinski in November of 1893 to incorporate the congregation of Agoodis Achem of Setauket, they stated that they had met as a congregation for the past three years.<sup>43</sup> The previous year George Bayles had sold them about five-eighths of an acre for their use as a cemetery. According to the deed, "the said George P. Bayles doth covenant with the said party . . . That [they] shall quietly enjoy said premises."<sup>44</sup> This followed the pattern of establishing a cemetery prior to constructing a religious building, for it was not until Saturday, September 12, 1896, that the *Riverhead News* reported: "A new Jewish synagogue, 24 x 36 feet, has been dedicated at Setauket. The structure cost about \$1,500 completed." It was built by William Deckman, and Sam Golden, Elias' grandson, recalls that it had an arched entrance with a small water font just inside to rinse the fingers while saying a blessing. On the left were stairs leading up to the women's balcony, the altar was in the rear, and all of the windows were stained glass.

In 1894, the Hebrew Employees Benevolent Association, Setauket #1, was formed to help the poor and sick.<sup>45</sup> Jews have always been noted for their self-help organizations; this one would seem to have been related to the rubber factory workers.

The Workingman's Solidarity Society of Setauket, incorporated in 1896, was another such group, concerned with caring for the sick, providing for burial, and further, providing a night school "for the better education of young people of foreign birth whose opportunities for education have been deficient or unimproved and especially that they may the sooner become acquainted with the language, laws, manners and customs of their adopted country and thereby the better qualified for society and citizenship."<sup>46</sup>

Members of the Solidarity Society were undoubtedly Jewish "socialists," immigrants who, in Europe or upon coming to America, decided to break with the limitations and restraints of Orthodoxy and Old World Jewry and pursue idealistic goals through worldly, nonreligious means. In the 1880's and 1890's, Jewish socialists were more concerned with the "hope of self-transformation . . . than organizing working-class protest."<sup>47</sup> The Setauket group was probably affiliated with the Workmen's Circle, created in New York in 1892 to organize

workers and provide them with essential services, such as sick care and burial.

In January 1897, Adolph Cohn, one of its members, conveyed to the Solidarity Society a property of slightly under half an acre that he had recently bought.<sup>48</sup> Adjoining the Agoodis Achem cemetery, this was to be used for the society's cemetery. Other than that, and the fact that it owned a hall between the Methodist church and the synagogue, nothing else is known about the society.

The original rubber factory where most Jews worked was succeeded by several others, each, in turn, succumbing to fire, bankruptcy, or the pressures of the U.S. Rubber trust. Finally, about the time of World War I, the last company sold off its holdings. Long before that, by 1900, most of the religious as well as the nonreligious Jews had left Setauket for lack of employment, and the synagogue had closed.

It was not until after World War II that the Setauket area experienced any sizable return of Jewish families. In 1948, the congregation's name was changed from Agoodis Achem to the North Shore Jewish Center and renovations were started on the old building; by 1970 a large new building was completed to accommodate the 331 families which were members.<sup>49</sup> Incorporated into the building were the stained glass windows from the old synagogue and the two original Torahs were placed in the new ark.

### *Sag Harbor*

Further east, in Sag Harbor, Harry Spodick tells of his father, Edel, putting up his gold watch as a deposit to buy land for a Jewish cemetery in 1890.<sup>50</sup> This was undoubtedly after the meeting at the office of Thomas F. Bisgood, on December 15 of that year, when Sami Klein and Nathan Myerson formed the Jewish Cemetery Association of Sag Harbor with six trustees, all of them Russian Jews.<sup>51</sup> This is significant, since from the start in Sag Harbor there were two distinct Jewish communities. The Jews from Russia and those from Hungary brought with them European social antagonisms and refused to worship, socialize, or be buried together.

The Hungarians formed their own Independent Jews Cemetery Association of Sag Harbor in 1899.<sup>52</sup> They bought a half-acre of land for their cemetery, bordered on the west by the Russian Jewish cemetery.

A fence of iron rails was erected between the two which still exists, as do the two cemetery associations.

The Sag Harbor synagogue, financed in part by the famous New York philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff, was dedicated in 1900. According to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of September 29, 1900, the building was 30 feet by 24 feet, with a basement and a gallery for the women. The article continued: "Long Gothic windows, supplied with stained glass let in abundant light and air. At night, the edifice is illuminated by gas, the Welsbach system being used." Still further: "In the basement has been placed the baptismal font, also bath rooms with hot and cold water, and all the latest sanitary plumbing." Since Jews do not use baptismal fonts, we can assume that the reporter was referring to the *mikvah* (ritual bath). With seating for one hundred, the synagogue "cost in the neighborhood of \$2,500." It was the synagogue of the Jewish Association of United Brethren of Sag Harbor, which had a membership of thirty-six persons, all of Russian origin.

In the same article, the *Eagle* notes, "Another Hebrew society, apart from the United Brethren, also exists . . . known as the Independent Jewish Association, and is largely composed of natives of Hungary. The society has this week had the renting of Engraver's Hall . . . for their celebration of Rosh Hashanah."

The article gives an interesting picture of the position of Jews in the community in 1900, two years prior to the local newspaper census report of five hundred Jewish men, women, and children "invading" the village. "Twenty years ago it would have been difficult to find a representative of the Hebrew race in Sag Harbor, but the establishment of the Fahys' watchcase factory has brought large numbers. . . . In business the Jews have pushed rapidly to the fore. . . . They control the clothing and fruit trade, and upon the main business thoroughfares fifteen large stores testify to their industry. This does not include the number of wagon and pack pedlars [*sic*], who work the surrounding country, making this village their headquarters."

In 1918, the Jewish community had financial difficulties and the synagogue mortgage was foreclosed. Three members of the congregation bought it back at public auction for \$1,400, and a legal agreement was made stipulating that the temple would never take another mortgage on its property. On May 2, 1918, a new certificate of incorporation was filed. From the names listed, it is clear that by then the Rus-

sian and Hungarian factions had finally made peace and joined in one congregation. On December 8, 1920, the *Sag Harbor Express* reported a celebration for the burning of the mortgage.

The 1920's brought hard times to Sag Harbor and to its Jewish community. A new manufacturing firm, the Alvin Silver Ware Company, which was controlled by Fahys, had come to the village in 1911 and also had many Jewish employees, including many salesmen. In 1925, a tremendous fire consumed the factory and an important part of the business section of the village. According to the *Express*, "The losses occasioned by the fire for the entire block that New Year's morning were estimated as of \$750,000."<sup>53</sup>

The factories, badly damaged physically and financially by the fire, were finished off by the Depression. By 1931 they were closed, though a watchman remained on the Fahys premises until 1937 when Bulova took a ten-year lease on the building prior to buying it. Most of the Jews had already left the village. Sherley Ballen Katz remembers being the only Jew in her class when she was in high school during the depression years. Yet enough families remained to maintain the synagogue. Thus, although the Sag Harbor synagogue was not the first to be built, it is the earliest synagogue building still in continuous use.

### Greenport

Greenport is the only community where any background can be found as to the internal workings of the early congregations. There, a Minute Book was unearthed, written in, Yiddish and dating from October 5, 1902, the "First Men's Meeting." At that meeting, it was decided to name the synagogue [Anshe] Tifereth Israel and to charge \$6 dues a year per family, "Either to pay 25 cents a month or every three months."<sup>54</sup> The *chevra*, or congregation, had been meeting for many years; it was decided at this point to build a synagogue.

On October 19, at the "2nd Regular Mitting" (*sic*; written in English, as were all proper names in the original book), the committee went to a lawyer with the charter, which had cost \$11, and decided to "buy a lot for benefit of Congregation 50 x 150 for \$200. All members will contribute to buy lot." Donations of \$5 and \$10 are noted. By November the "committee reported that a lot could be purchased from Mr. Welsh [Wells] for \$300"; a deposit of \$50 was given in De-

ember, and the fundraising began in earnest. Committees were sent to Riverhead and Sag Harbor, and another covered the village of Greenport itself, while the building committee "reported that Welsh wants \$1350 to build and Stirling Corwin wants \$1100. . . . It was decided to try a third carpenter. Perhaps it will be cheaper." Mr. Corwin got the job "for \$1130." Mr. Sandman gave a mortgage for \$1,000, and three men, Ben Ballen, Selig Kaplan, and Sam Levine, signed a note for the balance of \$130. The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1904. It is interesting to note that the Kaplan and Levine families are still actively involved with the Greenport Jewish community, while the Ballen family lives in a village of western Long Island where they are actively involved with the local synagogue.

Collection—and noncollection—of funds figures prominently in the minutes of the Greenport congregation. Beside the dues, there are initiation fees, fees for "outsiders," fees for using the ritual bath and for using the ritual slaughterer. All are debated, noted, written in or complained about at every meeting, where each "50 cent piece" is crucial to the survival of the synagogue. In 1912, a donation of \$250 is recorded from Jacob H. Schiff, the same New York philanthropist who made a contribution to the building of the Sag Harbor synagogue. There are no details as to whether it was solicited in the city or made, perhaps, after a visit by Schiff to Greenport, where the wealthy often visited on their yachts in the summertime.

The mortgage was in trouble by 1913 and there was considerable scrambling around for funds. The Minute Books—or perhaps the available translation of them—are unclear as to the details, although there is mention of an application to the Southold Bank for funds. There is also a sheet of stationery from "N. Goldin's 'Style Shop,' " stating, "What will you donate to help raise the remaining \$225.00 to pay off the morgage [*sic*]" followed by a list of names and amounts ranging \$1 to \$50 (from the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society). Most of the pledges are between \$5 and \$10; all of them are marked "Paid." This fundraising would appear to have taken place in December 1914.

There was never a foreclosure, and the little synagogue is still functioning as a synagogue. Attempts at getting and keeping a rabbi who will also teach the children are as difficult today as the Minute Book shows they were in the early part of the century, for basically the same reason: it is hard for a small congregation to retain a full-time Jewish

leader in an area where there is so little else that is Jewish beyond the synagogue itself.

The Jews of Greenport never started their own Jewish cemetery; they used the cemetery in Sag Harbor.

### *Bellport*

During this period, one other community came into existence, but for some reason its development soon stopped. Since there are no remaining local members, information can be gathered only from documents and from recent correspondence. In 1890 the New York and Brooklyn Suburban Investment Company of New York incorporated in Suffolk County. The year before it had purchased a great deal of property from George E. Hagerman, one of its trustees.<sup>55</sup> This land was located in what was to become known as Hagerman, an area overlapping East Patchogue and western Bellport. In 1891, three factories were incorporated in Bellport,<sup>56</sup> although *Lain's Brooklyn and Long Island Business Directory 1892* lists only two. Also in 1891 and for several years thereafter, literally hundreds of lots, 100 by 25 feet, were sold for \$75 to people with Jewish surnames.<sup>57</sup> By November 1892, a group of men met and agreed to incorporate as Agidath Achim Anshe Bellport, or the Society of Residents of Bellport, "to worship in the Hebrew faith, according to the Ancient Orthodox Hebrew Rituals, and to own lands or cemeteries for the burial of the dead."<sup>58</sup> Several of these men, newly elected officers of this incipient congregation, had bought land in Hagerman in 1891.

Beyond that, very little is known. Although a letter from the local historical society disclaims "any Jewish families with names you have listed [from the incorporation papers] ever in Bellport,"<sup>59</sup> the LeBlang family, one of the congregation's founders, remembers that their grandfather had a farm and poolhall in Bellport within their memory.<sup>60</sup> What happened to the rest of the families, how many of the hundreds whose names are listed as grantees in the County Records ever finished the payments on their land in the county, how many actually moved to Bellport, and how and why they moved away are all matters of conjecture.

There is one other recorded Jewish presence in Bellport before the twentieth century. In 1874, the Bay House was built as a large tourist



boarding house/hotel. Apparently, it was quite glamorous and successful, being visited even by the famous "Diamond Jim" Brady. By 1894, the billiard rooms and bowling alley had faded, and it was bought at a foreclosure sale. Five years later, the Jewish Working Girls' Vacation Society of New York purchased it and used it for many years.<sup>61</sup> It is not known whether they chose to come to Bellport because some Jews already lived there or just because it was a resort community easily accessible to New York City by train.

### *Patchogue*

The community in nearby Patchogue was the fourth permanent congregation to be formally established. In 1904, the "Patchogue Hebrew Congregational Church" was incorporated by the group which met "at the rooms of Isaac Manus its usual place of worship."<sup>62</sup> Land was purchased and a synagogue built, with a mortgage of \$1,000.<sup>63</sup> In 1929, an adjacent piece of property was bought<sup>64</sup> and a new, larger synagogue built, prior to tearing down the small one. In 1931, the lieutenant-governor of New York, Herbert H. Lehman, attended the dedication of the new building; an old photograph shows him seated with twenty men and one woman in a large room with a floral carpet and curtains and tables covered with refreshments.<sup>65</sup>

There is some confusion concerning the land acquired for the Patchogue cemetery. Oral testimony from several sources states that the land was given to the grocer Daniel Davidow in payment for overdue debts, and Davidow then gave it to the burial society. That would corroborate the custom of establishing a cemetery very early in a congregation's existence as well as the fact that several gravestones predate the incorporation of the Patchogue Hebrew Cemetery Association in 1911.<sup>66</sup> However, recorded deeds show land purchased in 1906 by Aschiel Shapiro,<sup>67</sup> a good friend of Davidow's, and sold to the Cemetery Association in 1911, "on the express condition and understanding that all Hebrews now or hereafter residing in the village of Patchogue shall have the privilege of being buried in said premises free of charge."<sup>68</sup> Undoubtedly, both events occurred, but the details of the informal Davidow arrangement are unknown. The iron gates, brought to Patchogue by the Long Island Railroad and set up by David Greenfield and other community members, still guard the cemetery.

*Riverhead*

In Riverhead, the Jewish community met at first in private homes for the Sabbath, renting a hall when the High Holidays brought Jews in larger numbers from the surrounding areas. The group was not incorporated until 1911;<sup>69</sup> the synagogue was built in 1924. At that time, a committee went to the Sag Harbor synagogue, which was refurbishing, and bought its benches. According to local legend, one member of the Riverhead community was opposed to this purchase, perhaps because he was not on the committee, and so brought a chair from home, placing it in a position of honor on the eastern wall, and there he sat.

The small synagogue served the congregation of Riverhead until 1947 when a newly constructed building was opened a few streets away. The old building was sold to Samuel Harding, a founder of the original community, and his sons; the family cemented up the large, arched windows and used the building as their furniture warehouse, a function it still serves.<sup>70</sup>

In 1936, the Riverhead congregation purchased the Jewish cemetery from Agoodis Achem of Setauket, having located three remaining members of that once large congregation. In 1937, a member of the Riverhead congregation, Samuel (Shmuel) Sackstein, fenced in the cemetery, including the part which had once belonged to the Solidarity Society, of which no members remained. Thus, both sections became the property of the Riverhead community by virtue of adverse possession.<sup>71</sup>

Patchogue and Riverhead complete the picture of the earliest communities of any size on eastern Long Island where institutional development took place. The five villages described were the nucleus for Jews seeking any sort of religious life. However, for the early settlers, religious life certainly was not all.

*The Hardships of Rural Life*

Daily life, for the twenty years before and after the turn of the century, was filled with poverty, hardship, and struggle, which, while it slowly improved, was typical of country living during that period. East-west roads on the Island existed from colonial days; on the East End, north and south roads were more like paths, used for hunting, carrying pre-

pared charcoal from the pits or cordwood from the woods, and getting to the water, which was the main transportation route. The Long Island Railroad reached Greenport in 1844. It moved out along the South Shore more slowly, reaching Sag Harbor by May 1870 and Montauk in 1895.<sup>72</sup> Thus travel was certainly possible, but it was uncomfortable, time-consuming, or costly.

Bicycles were used extensively as transportation after 1880. A neighbor of one Jewish family recalls that the peddler grandfather was constantly in trouble with the railroad conductors; by having to get both his pack and his bicycle on and off when traveling to a distant village, he often made the train late.<sup>73</sup> Another woman remembers hearing that her father and his uncle strapped washtubs on their backs for delivery by bicycle across the iced-over bay between Greenport and Shelter Island. "Deliveries were obviously a difficult thing. They couldn't afford to hire horses and carts so they did what they could. . . . They could use a bicycle and travelled very quickly."<sup>74</sup>

About 1900, an occasional car was seen; in 1908 the roads were oiled, and by 1915 there were concrete roads between Moriches and Southampton. Peddlers who had slowly graduated to a horse and wagon were now able to sell from a car or a small truck, traveling farther and still being able to come home at night. Very often, sales were on credit; a dollar down, a dollar a week—or a month.

Kerosene lamps were used after 1850, gas lighting didn't arrive until fifty years later and electricity for ten or more years after that. In Eastport, the first night the electricity was turned on in Harry Goldstein's store neighbors came running, thinking the building was on fire.<sup>75</sup> Telephone communication also became possible about 1910, if a family could afford it.

### *Women's Work Was Never Done*

In this agricultural area, food and animals were home-grown; fish were available from the many surrounding and inland waters. Cooking and baking were done on a wood or coal stove, and canning and preserving food for winter were typical household chores. Many are the memories of the wonderful foods prepared in those years, but nostalgic smiles and sighs are always followed by, "But oy, it was hard work. My mother worked so hard."

Mrs. Sarah Spodick Epstein of Sag Harbor tells of her mother's weekly baking: "Flour used to come in big twenty-four and one-half pound bags. We had a great big pan, and on Thursday night we would stand and knead that dough. Poppa used to read the paper. Sometimes I would help Momma. And I would say, 'Am I finished?' Poppa would look over his glasses. '*Nuch a bissel*,' 'a little more.' I'd pound at that bread. '*Nuch a bissel*.' It was hard. In the morning, she'd get up. She'd roll out that dough and bake that bread. She'd braid her bread, fold it, and make challehs. . . . Then she'd make kuchens. Then she'd make ruggelech. And bagel. . . . She'd make sour bread, too, pumpernickel. You could smell her cooking all the way up Glover Street."<sup>76</sup>

Sewing, too, was typical; store-bought clothing for large families was an extravagance few could afford. Mrs. Epstein remembers, "My mother used to have one kid by her side, one in the belly, and one by the hand, and she went down to sew. She made all the clothes."<sup>77</sup>

For many women, childbearing, cooking, baking, cleaning, and sewing were only part of their responsibilities. Beyond that, they often had to run a store, help tend the animals, and maintain a boarding house. Mary Brown Frank, in talking about her childhood on the farm in East Quogue, says, "My mother opened up the house to all the Jewish peddlers. She had them from all over. . . . My mother kept a kosher house and she made some beautiful things. . . . And the peddlers would come in, sit around the table and help themselves. There was always plenty of fruit, plenty of food to eat."<sup>78</sup> And plenty of work.

Medical care was extremely unsophisticated. In Sag Harbor, a young boy was treated for pneumonia by having his body coated heavily with chicken fat;<sup>79</sup> in Patchogue, a prominent surgeon recalls the same illness being treated by having "someone come in and put on the *bunken*, the cups,"<sup>80</sup> and in Setauket, "the medication used for the flu was a certain amount of whiskey."<sup>81</sup> A characteristic description of a doctor states: "Dr. Russell was an exceptionally good doctor. He used to ride a bicycle to make his calls. From a bicycle he went to a motorcycle and from a motorcycle to a car. His charges were fifty cents to call at your home. If you had the fifty cents, all well and good, and if you didn't it was just as well. He was that kind of man. He had a little satchel almost like an attache case, and it held vials or test tubes filled with different kinds of pills. And they'd give you the pills right out of there."<sup>82</sup>

Less pleasant is this memory: "There were no hospitals then. Everybody was born at home. My mother was a torn wreck down there. My mother had ten children but there were seven of us alive. The others died as children from various childhood diseases. . . . My mother was bucked by a cow and had half of her breast ripped off. My mother did her own washing, and when picking up that great big boiler it fell on her. After that cow bucked her, she had this breast burned with hot water. It was a terrible life for her, but we didn't know it then."<sup>83</sup>

Women had other problems as well, for it was their responsibility to maintain a Jewish home, with all that meant in terms of rites, rituals, holidays, and children. Foods had to be prepared in a certain way, and meat and chicken couldn't be used unless they were killed by a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer). Often that entailed traveling many miles by bicycle or horse and wagon to another town to have it done, or doing without. Extra work and preparation went into creating holiday foods, and Passover posed its own problems, as matzos had to be brought from New York and everything else had to be made at home. Jewish education for the children was a mother's concern, too, and often it was almost impossible. Trained teachers could not be induced to stay too long in these communities which were isolated from the Jewish mainstream.

### *Social Relations*

Isolation was a major factor in women's lives. Usually coming from New York's Lower East Side where they had family and friends and a myriad of possible activities ranging from the Yiddish theater to free lectures at the Educational Alliance, young brides were abruptly thrust into a different world. In the rural areas, if an immigrant woman could speak Polish or Lithuanian, she might be able to communicate with a few of her neighbors who couldn't speak English either, but they rarely socialized together. For one thing, farm women had little time for a social life; for another, most rural activities centered around the church.

In the villages, language was only one of several barriers. Not only could a non-English-speaking woman not talk to her Christian neighbors, but there were lines drawn within the small Jewish communities themselves. In Patchogue the division was between the English-speak-

ing women and those who spoke only Yiddish, in Sag Harbor there was little or no communication between Hungarians and Russians, and in Setauket observant and nonobservant Jewish women didn't mingle.

Nevertheless, it was still more sociable in a town than on a farm. There were more Jews to be among and the early synagogues provided a focal point for activities. Women formed organizations, such as the Daughters of Israel Aid Society,<sup>84</sup> the Daughters of Jacob Aid Society,<sup>85</sup> or the Hebrew Mutual Aid Society,<sup>86</sup> with the purpose of distributing food packages or making small loans to help the needy among those even newer than they. On an informal basis, the ladies met for daily coffee klatches, and entire families would gather on Saturday nights for a weekly poker or pinochle game. Family picnics on Sunday and the celebration of Jewish holidays rounded out the social scene.

The aloneness and hardships of rural life and the limitations of being several tiny communities within a small, non-Jewish community created a situation most women did not enjoy. Some adapted better than others; most did not like living in the country.<sup>87</sup>

However, European Jews, coming from lands where they were openly harassed and killed, felt the freedoms of America very deeply, and framed citizenship papers proudly occupied a prominent position on many a living room table or wall. Here they could worship God as they pleased, sleep peacefully in their beds at night, and have the opportunity to succeed. America was the new promised land. But it was not their America, and in these Yankee towns, acceptance came slowly to men, women, and children alike.

For the men, it came through business. Being in daily contact with the people of the community took some of the edge off their "differentness." These men were outspoken in their love for America and their attachment to the little villages where they had settled. Bessie Frank recalls a nephew taking her father for a ride to the ocean. "And Pop gets out of the car and he was looking at the ocean. He had such a good look on his face and he says, 'There isn't any place in this world like Southampton.' So my nephew says to him very innocently, 'Grandpa, have you been anyplace else?' 'That makes no difference!' There was no town in the United States that was as good or as nice as Southampton."<sup>88</sup>

Few women got too involved in village activities. They were not

asked to be members of the Ladies Village Improvement Society, nor were they accepted into the local Eastern Star. If they worked in the family store, they became wellknown, for, after quickly learning English, it was usually they who waited on customers and allowed charge accounts. The women who stayed at home extended themselves on a one-to-one basis, donating to local charities, sewing for the parent of a child's friend, or taking some food to a sick neighbor down the street.

### *Prejudice and Acceptance*

Childhood memories vary, but they all include the hurts and wounds of anti-Semitism as practiced by children against other children. Not being invited to parties, not being invited to dances, being chased home from school and called names are consistently repeated stories. But there were fun times, too, and some friendships were formed in school years that exist to this day. As a member of one of three Jewish families in East Quogue, Julius Sachs, born in 1900, recalls: "I don't think that we had too many problems because we were Jewish for the simple reason . . . we played a lot of basketball. We played a lot of baseball, and we had a lot of friends. . . . Oh, we had a few fights once in a while. If they wanted to call you 'Jew, Sheenie,' well, you had to fight. We wouldn't take it. We were pretty tough kids. But I had friends. I had Jewish friends. I had friends who were Gentiles, too."<sup>89</sup>

Jewish immigrants slowly demonstrated to the descendants of the original Yankee settlers that they, too, were fiercely independent, industrious, thrifty, God-fearing, and good businessmen. At the same time, they shared with their Irish, Italian, Polish, and Lithuanian immigrant neighbors a poignant awareness of all that had been left behind—traditions, culture, family and friends, as well as troubles—and a desire to become an integral part of their new country. These factors all came into play as the Jews settled into the villages of eastern Long Island.

Economically, culturally, and eventually socially, the Jews contributed to the growth of the entire area. They extended credit to other immigrants, to Indians, and to blacks when others wouldn't; they invested in real estate; they founded banks, fire departments, and local water companies as well as concert associations. They survived the scourge of the Ku Klux Klan, which paraded down Main Streets,

burned crosses, and withheld employment very openly in every village in the 1920's. By the 1930's and 1940's, Jews were able to become school board members, village fathers, and even mayors. The American dream started to come true.

### *The Advantages of Village Life*

This success story, while it parallels similar stories of smalltown Jews throughout the country, differs in many ways from the patterns of life established by turn-of-the-century first-generation Jews in the cities.<sup>90</sup>

Although the centrality of religion in European Jewish communities had started to shift, the law had, for centuries, provided a code of behavior and values which guided and governed people's lives. For Jews arriving in American cities from Eastern Europe, a framework for observance was in place in the form of synagogues, *shochets*, and large numbers of like-minded people. However, bosses were not necessarily like-minded, and having to work on Saturday was the rule rather than the exception. Religion was no longer the pivotal point in a society where so many other ideas, possibilities, and necessities claimed people's attention and strength.<sup>91</sup>

A man could more easily work for himself in the country and thus remain observant. "My father wouldn't work Friday night or Saturday for a million dollars";<sup>92</sup> "My father could have been a very wealthy man if he'd given up on his religion to the extent of opening the store before 9 o'clock on Saturday night when they got paid in the factory across the street at 5."<sup>93</sup> These and similar words were repeated time and time again.

In the country, staying kosher, observing rituals and holidays, passing the tradition along were all difficult but considered extremely important by parents and an accepted part of children's lives. Being Jewish did not seem to present the obstacles to becoming "Americanized" that it did for many in the cities. Religion helped hold small-town Jews together, and perhaps because it was so difficult to sustain, it was firmly established. Without all the auxiliary supports available in the city, a small-town "observant" Jew undoubtedly differed from his urban brother. Nevertheless, he not only existed as Jew but maintained his Jewish identity in an environment where, for lack of these supports, the ease of and preference for doing so were challenged every day.



A strong sense of Jewish identification came not only from within but from outside. Judge Abraham Frank, who grew up in Southampton, recalls: "If, in school, we were discussing history involving Jews, you felt all eyes were upon you. After all, I was the only Jewish boy in high school for most of my high school career. I carried on my shoulders the full burden and the glory of Jews everywhere. The good Jews added to my glory and the bad Jews made me ashamed. I had to carry this burden, as all of us did."<sup>94</sup>

### *The Jewish Family*

Family life, too, changed in the move from Europe to America and then further differed between city and country life. In Europe, respect was accorded the father, to whom the family turned for leadership, guidance, and sage advice. He was the authority.<sup>95</sup> In America's crowded urban centers, revered fathers became pants pressers or cigar rollers, without status, downtrodden, exhausted from working eighteen hours a day. Often the rest of the family worked in sweatshops or factories in order to survive. As internal family hierarchy and roles changed, family structure disintegrated.<sup>96</sup>

In a small town the family unit remained very strong. The father was the head of the household and given all the respect due to that position. When mother and children worked, it was within the family's business, which helped to keep hierarchy and roles intact. Even when the mother essentially ran the store, which happened in many cases, or when children grew up to take over the business or farm, Poppa was still "the boss."

The road to success for children was also perceived and pursued differently in urban and rural areas. To one growing up in the seething maelstrom of the new American ghettos, while success in business was certainly an acceptable way out, a college and then professional education represented a guaranteed passport "uptown" with broad implications not only in terms of earning power but also in regard to status.<sup>97</sup> Professional education was not so much of a burning goal in village society, where economic success rested in one's own hands and status was more readily achieved by one's proportionate vested interest in the community. Thus, when an immigrant family acquired some property, which most of them did comparatively rapidly, in the form

of a home, a store, a farm, they were already on their way up. A child could as easily be considered a success by taking over or enlarging a family's property holdings in the town, becoming involved in village organizations, or holding public office as by earning a degree. In fact, there were many who returned to the family business or farm after going to college and even some who obtained professional degrees and then took over the store. Social friendships were based more on who you grew up with than whether you went to school. Of course, having a child with a college education brought *yichus* (status) to a Jewish family anywhere, but the significance to the one earning it varied according to where one lived. Generally, for children of immigrants in small towns, there were not the same educational pressures as there were in urban areas, or as there would be on their own children later on.

As with urban Jews, wives, children, parents, brothers, and sisters were brought from Europe, but in the country they were more rapidly taught, helped, and set up in business. Lou Harding describes a typical situation: "My mother's brother took care of my father when he came to America and brought him out to the Island where he already had a department store. . . . They wanted him to go into business for himself so they looked for another town, east."<sup>98</sup>

The practice of sending relatives and *lantsmen* to other villages established Jewish networking throughout the area in the early years which remained strong with the passage of time. This was crucial in many regards. It created a milieu in which Jewish families socialized between towns, which, in turn, enabled young people to meet and marry other Jews. Economically, the establishment and success of a new store on Main Street drew others to try the same, and so each tiny Jewish community expanded while keeping its contacts with the others. "Heck," says Lawrence Goldstein of Eastport, "if I needed a certain model refrigerator for a customer and didn't have it, I could call Meyer's over in Riverhead and he'd help me out."<sup>99</sup>

Networking carried over into religion, as each of the five synagogues called on people from at least a 25-mile radius for support in the form of membership, donations, and participation. As Abe Bernstein of Center Moriches recalls in the year 1930, "We were in one of our [duck] brooder houses and a representative of the Patchogue Jewish Center came and he said, 'Harry, we're going to build a new Tem-

ple in Patchogue. What do you think you can give?' Pop says, ' \$500.' I looked and I said, 'Dad, where are you going to get \$500?' And he said, '*Gut zull helfin* [God will provide]!' ”<sup>100</sup>

### *Upward Mobility*

In the cities, there seemed to prevail, perhaps out of necessity, a sense of sacrifice for the future. No matter how hard things were, they became manageable with the thought that the younger generation, the children, would benefit. Parents worked themselves into the ground, and often the children did, too, in the belief that somehow, through the availability of night schools, public schools, lectures, and cultural events—and more sacrifice—life would eventually improve.<sup>101</sup>

The men who went to the country were not willing to put off the benefits of life in America for their children. They wanted those benefits for themselves, now. They were fiercely independent, unwilling or unable to work for anyone else, mavericks who did not fit the group mold. They were strong, not only physically but psychologically, able to bear the shame and rebuffs of being so completely different from the people they moved among, and clever enough to soon be more like them outwardly while retaining the distinctive difference of being Jewish. They were self-educated, both intellectually and in the ways of American life, unable to turn to the settlement house or public health nurse for advice and assistance, or to such institutions as the Educational Alliance or the Yiddish theater for help in learning the language or for entertainment. They were completely autonomous in a nonsupportive world, and those who remained in that world were successful. Theodore Leavitt described his father's progress in a village: "My father arrived in Riverhead in 1883 with a basket under his arm and he peddled the countryside. . . . Then he owned this building and had one of the first movie theaters. Financially, it was a dismal failure. But he had a clothing store downstairs and he became a fur buyer, dealing in raw furs. Trapping was fairly extensive out here. Muskrat, mink, 'possum, raccoon, fox . . . and he would buy the pelts. By the '20's he had a Ford and a chauffeur. He liked to drive in style. L'Hommedieu was the chauffeur's name, but my father could never say it. He used to call him 'Yapcha.' 'Yapcha, let's go,' he'd say."<sup>102</sup> Abe Bernstein talked about his family on the farm: "My parents came to Center Moriches in 1907.

. . . [The farm] turned out to be a little, old house on twenty acres of rough land, out in the woods three miles from anyplace, with just a narrow path leading to it. . . . My father built this street [now called Bernstein Boulevard] with a pickax and a shovel. . . . It wasn't easy in those days to go in business. . . . By about 1914, he started raising ducks. It was a hard life, doing everything by hand. . . . Eventually, [by the middle '40's] we were raising 175,000 to 200,000 ducks a year."<sup>103</sup>

*Jewish Long Island in the 1980's*

Today, together with their Christian neighbors, the Jews of eastern Long Island share the pleasures and problems of American small-town life. They join Rotary Clubs and Garden Clubs, Chambers of Commerce and Friends of the Library. Their children go to local schools, then to college, and many never return except for a holiday visit. Young people seem to lose touch with their religion despite efforts at childhood religious education.<sup>104</sup> Many marry out of their religion;<sup>105</sup> more and more marriages are followed by divorce.<sup>106</sup> Golf, tennis, boating, and skiing are part of the life-style, but so are homosexuality and compulsive gambling, drugs and alcohol, affecting people in their middle years as well as teenagers.<sup>107</sup> Many former distinctions between Jewish and non-Jewish groups are becoming blurred or disappearing altogether.<sup>108</sup>

For Jews who do return to—or never left—the small villages of eastern Suffolk County where their families started life in America, some things have changed, others are modified, while still other basic facts and feelings seem to go on forever.

Jewish immigrants have been replaced by Puerto Ricans and Asians; there is a large new community of Greeks in the Greenport area which is slowly spreading into other villages. And there are, again, some few Russian Jewish immigrants, escaping from new Soviet repressions, filtering individually and in small groups into the villages and countryside, whose impact is yet to be measured.

The five original communities to which immigrant Jews were drawn a century ago have lost their initial attractiveness. The rubber factories of Setauket, which burned down many years ago, were never replaced, the watchcase factory in Sag Harbor is being turned into condominiums, and Greenport today is considered an economically

depressed area. The lace mill in Patchogue functions as a group of small industrial shops, and Riverhead's Main Street has suffered from the growth of nearby shopping malls. Former farmland is now sprouting unusual architectural configurations commissioned by city dwellers for summer houses, and former duck farms along the water are the site of one- and two-acre private homes.

Yet, as ninety-six-old Fannie B. Lipman said in 1977, "The Jews, they *tsopel* [squirm] for the country."<sup>109</sup> Like those who came before, they want it for themselves and for their children.<sup>110</sup> They are drawn by the clean air and small schools, farm stands with fresh produce in the summer, ice skating on the ponds in winter, very little violent crime, no crowds, the opportunity to be your own person, and the strong possibility of making a good living.

Today, Jewish families move to Setauket because of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and its new teaching hospital; the waters and rural beauty of Sag Harbor and Greenport attract numbers of artists and writers. Patchogue is still a commercial center, has a hospital, and is in close proximity to Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Riverhead brings people connected with the County Center and the courts, its hospital, and businessmen participating in its redevelopment.

Blue collar and white, entrepreneurs, corporation executives and professionals, the literati and the artists, the affluent and the lower middle class are all part of eastern Long Island's Jewish ranks.<sup>111</sup> As active community members, they continue to make economic, political, social, and cultural contributions to their hometowns far beyond their numbers.

Networking among the Jewish communities still exists. Businessmen bring relatives from New York to help in the store before opening their own in a nearby village, and young people from different villages are introduced to other Jewish youngsters, today not so much through families as through temple-affiliated clubs and organizations. Some difficulties of small-town life also still exist. People living in outlying communities like Southold and Remsenburg, Quogue and Aquebogue have to travel ten or twenty miles to the nearest synagogue, and there is no *shochet* on all of the East End. Anti-Semitism still exists; the increasingly noted occurrences have caused the establishment of a Racial/Religious Incident Section of the Suffolk County Police Department.

Religious options have expanded. The old Sag Harbor synagogue has changed from Orthodox to Reform, and the old Greenport synagogue from Orthodox to Conservative. In addition, other congregations range from a Lubavitch Chasidic group, which started in Stony Brook, combating the Jews for Jesus movement, to a Reform temple in a beautiful former mansion in East Hampton. There are a newly formed Orthodox Young Israel congregation in Patchogue and a Reconstructionist congregation in Smithtown. Jews on the East End can now attend fifteen synagogues where once there were five, and in Suffolk County there are a total of thirty-nine<sup>112</sup> where, a hundred years ago, there was only Breslau, a place for a peddler to get a kosher meal and worship from a Torah kept in the front parlor closet before striking out into the Christian wilderness.

Linda Livni, who spent ten years working for ABC and NBC television in Israel, returned to Greenport five years ago. Samuel Levine, her grandfather, helped establish the synagogue in 1902; her family has been there since the early 1890's. After an extended search, "My roots are really here," she says.<sup>113</sup> Ronald Lipetz, raised in Southampton, says he "never had any thoughts about practicing elsewhere, none whatsoever."<sup>114</sup> And Lloyd Gerard, who is now in business with his son in the old family store, says, "Occasionally, when I'm in the store by myself . . . I actually sense the presence of my father, my grandfather, and my great-great uncle Levi the peddler."<sup>115</sup>

Eight percent of the total population of Suffolk County in 1981 was Jewish;<sup>116</sup> on the East End it was much less than that.<sup>117</sup> Most of these Jews arrived after the 1950's,<sup>118</sup> but the groundwork had been laid for them a hundred years before, by the Kaplans and the Katzs, the Davids and Dranitzkes, the Goldens and the Goldins.

Only a handful of the current Jewish population are descendants of those earliest permanent Jewish settlers. Yet, among a people known as wanderers, and in America's generally mobile society, they are unique. It is hard to think of Long Island's towns without these pioneer Jewish families. As anyone who lives there will tell you without hesitation, "They've been here forever." And among these descendants, there is a tremendous pride in that first immigrant Jewish family member who "chose Long Island as to be his home."

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Helene Gerard, of blessed memory, died February 2, 1986. A librari-

an, she grew up in Patchogue, Long Island. She had just finished a book-length manuscript entitled "My Father Was a Dreamer: An Oral History of Small-Town Jews."

### Notes

1. Thomas A. Bailey, *Probing America's Past: A Critical Examination of Major Myths and Misconceptions*, 2 vols. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973). See also Nicholas Cords and Patrick Gerster, eds., *Myth and the American Experience*, 2 vols. (New York: Glencoe Press, 1973).

2. As an example, foreign employees of Henry Ford participated in a pageant "in which workers clad in native costumes entered a huge melting pot and emerged in identical suits, carrying American flags." Mary Cable et al., *American Manners and Morals* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1969), p. 306.

3. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), p. 86.

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9. See Harriet and Fred Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1984); Allon Schoener, *The American Jewish Album: 1654 to the Present* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), pp. 98-201; "The Jewish Community of Toms River Salutes the American Bicentennial," Council of Jewish Organizations of the Greater Toms River Area, February 22, 1976.

10. Cf. Kenneth Kann, "Reconstructing the History of a Community," *International Journal of Oral History* 2 (February 1981): 4-12.

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13. For a picture of the Jew Joshua Montefiore, who lived in Sag Harbor during this period, see James Truslow Adams, *History of the Town of Southampton (East of Canoe Place)*, (Bridgehampton, N.Y.: Hampton Press, 1918), p. 155.
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15. Edwin P. Adkins, *Setauket, the First Three Hundred Years, 1655-1955* (New York: David McKay Co., 1955), pp. 80-83.
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17. Evelyn Mentz Ellis, "Lindenhurst, My Home Town," *Suffolk County Historical Society Register* 33 (March 1983): 93.
18. Suffolk County Records: Certificates of Incorporations, Liber B, p. 215, (hereafter cited as SCI).
19. Breslau Cemetery Association Records. October 1876. Evelyn M. Ellis, Lindenhurst Village Historian, to Helene Gerard, March 18, 1981.
20. SCI, Liber 1, p. 257.
21. Robert Blumberg, personal interview, August 19, 1977.
22. Belle Cedar Bernstein, personal interview, August 9, 1977.
23. Sam Golden, personal interview, August 7, 1975.
24. Mendall Press, personal interview, July 31, 1975.
25. Miriam Lipman Glickman, personal interview, August 2, 1979.
26. Oscar Goldin, personal interview, July 15, 1975.
27. Abram Brown, personal interview, September 13, 1975.
28. Harry Spodick, personal interview, July 28, 1978.
29. Lawrence Goldstein, personal interview, September 25, 1977.
30. Fletcher and Charlotte Warner, personal interview, December 15, 1977.
31. Marc Stern, "Light Manufacturing in the Three Village Area, 1850-1911" (doctoral diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1980), p. 3.
32. SCI, Liber 1, p. 94. This factory was to employ between seven and eight hundred people, with an annual payroll of \$500,000. George Finckenor, Sag Harbor Historian, to Helene Gerard, July 30, 1979.
33. SCI, Liber 1, p. 393.
34. *Ibid.*, Liber 1, p. 477.
35. *Ibid.*, Liber 1, p. 478.
36. Scrapbook A [newspaper clippings], John Jermain Library, Sag Harbor.
37. Sarah Spodick Epstein, personal interview, September 10, 1977.
38. Stern, "Light Manufacturing," p. 24. Taken from *Port Jefferson Echo*, September 24, 1893; *Port Jefferson Times*, November 4, 1893. In 1888, Elberson brought almost 100 families to Setauket (p. 24); that same year the rubber factory employed over 444 workers (p. 26).
39. Isidore Davidow, personal interview, October 4, 1975.
40. Len Cohn, personal interview, October 20, 1975.
41. Abe Bernstein, personal interview, October 25, 1975.
42. Mary Brown Frank, personal interview, September 19, 1977.
43. SCI, Liber 2, p. 337.
44. Suffolk County Deeds, Liber 376, p. 283 (hereafter referred to as SCD).
45. SCI, Liber 2, p. 349.
46. *Ibid.*, Liber 3, p. 22.
47. Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 102.



48. SCD, Liber 453, p. 503.
49. Howard Klein, *Three Village Guidebook* (Setauket, N.Y.: Three Village Historical Society, 1976), p. 104.
50. Spodick, interview.
51. SCI, Liber 1, p. 447.
52. *Ibid.*, Liber 3, p. 150.
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54. Congregation Tifereth Israel, *A Record of the Early Years: An "As Is" Translation and Transcription of the Minutes Commencing October 5, 1902 in Commemoration [sic] of the 75th Anniversary* (privately published, n.d.). This and all the following information regarding the Greenport synagogue is taken from the Minute Book.
55. SCI, Liber 2, p. 119.
56. *Ibid.*, Liber 1, pp. 467, 477, 478.
57. See, e.g., SCD, Libers 351 ff.
58. SCI, Liber 2, p. 227.
59. Stephanie S. Bigelow, Curator, Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society, to Helene Gerard, March 18, 1981.
60. Howard LeBlang, telephone interview, April 12, 1981.
61. Stephanie S. Bigelow, *Bellport and Brookhaven: A Saga of the Sibling Hamlets at Old Purchase South* (Bellport, N.Y.: Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society, 1968), pp. 42-43.
62. SCI, Liber 4, p. 135.
63. SCD, Liber 1433, p. 127.
64. SCD, Liber 1434, p. 15.
65. Helene Gerard, *And We're Still Here: 100 Years of Small Town Jewish Life* (Rensselaer, N.Y.: Hier Publications, 1982), p. 24.
66. SCI, Liber 7, p. 353.
67. SCD, Liber 582, p. 186.
68. *Ibid.*, Liber 796, p. 255.
69. Isidore Scheinberg, "Historical Data," compiled April 28, 1975, pp. 7, 8.
70. Gerard, *And We're Still Here*, p. 26.
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72. Vincent F. Seyfried, *The Long Island Railroad: A Comprehensive History*, 7 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Vincent F. Seyfried, 1961-84), 2:41, 3:45, 6:94.
73. Cohn, interview.
74. Sherley Ballen Katz, personal interview, September 29, 1977.
75. Goldstein, interview, October 10, 1979.
76. Epstein, interview.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Mary Brown Frank, interview.
79. Spodick, interview.
80. Dr. Jacob Dranitzke, personal interview, September 24, 1975.
81. Golden, interview.
82. *Ibid.*
83. Etta Slessinger, personal interview, July 26, 1975.
84. SCI, Liber 9, p. 258.
85. *Ibid.*, Liber p. 263.
86. *Ibid.*, Liber 5, p. 160.
87. Gerard, *And We're Still Here*, pp. 27-32.

88. Bessie Frank, personal interview, August 2, 1975.
89. Julius Sachs, personal interview, October 23, 1977.
90. For urban life, see, for example, B. G. Rudolph, *From a Minyan to a Community: A History of the Jews of Syracuse* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1970); David Brener, *The Jews of Lancaster, Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pa.: Congregation Shaarai Shomayim, 1979); Norton B. Stern, ed., *The Jews of Los Angeles: Urban Pioneers* (Los Angeles: Southern California Jewish Historical Society, 1981).
91. Abraham J. Karp, *Golden Door to America: The Jewish Immigrant Experience* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 148–204; Allon Schoener, *Portal to America: The Lower East Side, 1870–1925* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1967), pp. 116–117.
92. Brown, interview.
93. Spodick, interview, July 28, 1975.
94. Judge Abraham Frank, personal interview, August 3, 1979.
95. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1952), p. 292.
96. Karp, *Golden Door to America*, pp. 119–147.
97. Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 87–88.
98. Lou Harding, personal interview, August 22, 1977.
99. Goldstein, interview.
100. Abe Bernstein, personal interview, October 25, 1975.
101. See Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 225–255.
102. Theodore Leavitt, personal interview, September 25, 1977.
103. Bernstein, interview.
104. In a letter to the *Jewish Week and American Examiner*, April 27, 1984, Dr. George Dubb, head of the Department of Research and Educational Information of the Jewish Education Service of North America, states that their studies “have found that in small communities in the United States as many as 80 percent of all eligible children are, at one time or another, enrolled in formal Jewish education programs.” See also Paul Ritterbrand and Steven M. Cohen, “The Social Characteristics of the New York Area Jewish Community, 1981,” *American Jewish Year Book 1984* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1983), p. 134.
105. Ritterbrand and Cohen, *American Jewish Year Book 1984*, p. 134, indicate that of the eight counties studied (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester), Suffolk has the highest rate of intermarriage (22 percent).
106. *Ibid.*, p. 145, indicates that Suffolk is second only to Manhattan, with a divorce rate of 7 percent.
107. Stewart Ain, “Alcoholism Cited as Serious Problem Among Jews,” *Jewish World*, January 13–19, 1984, p. 2, states that there are an estimated 17,000 Jewish alcoholics in Nassau and Suffolk counties out of 240,000 nationwide. See also Andrea Jolles, “Gay Synagogue Is the Haven for ‘Outsiders,’” *Jewish Week and American Examiner*, March 19, 1984, p. 4; Carol Steinberg, “Middle-Aged Drug Abusers, JCS’s New Caseload,” *Jewish World*, May 18–24, 1984, p. 17; Adam Snitzer, “Targeting Addicts,” *Jewish Week*, October 12, 1984, p. 4; “Conference on Compulsive Gambling Set,” *Jewish Week*, November 30, 1984, p. 20.
108. Ben Gallob, “‘Mainstream’ Problems on Rise,” *Jewish Week*, March 19, 1984, describes issues in American Jewry. Distributed through the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.
109. Fannie B. Lipman, personal interview, September 12, 1977. Ritterbrand and Cohen, *American Jewish Year Book, 1984*, pp. 129, 140, indicate that, by 1981, in the New York area, Suffolk County had experienced the largest population growth, reaching 106,200 out of a total

population of 1,284,200. Stewart Ain, "New Federation Figures No Surprise," *Jewish World*, August 10-16, 1984, p. 2, states that Percy Abrams, executive director of the United Jewish Ys of Long Island, and Elaine Sommer, casework supervisor of the Jewish Community Services of Long Island's Suffolk Office, both feel that by 1984 that figure was low.

110. Ritterbrand and Cohen, *American Jewish Year Book 1984*, p. 146, indicate that Suffolk County has the highest percentage of households with children.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138, 156-158, indicate that 34 percent of male heads of households in Suffolk County work full-time for themselves, 56 percent for others, and that the median income is \$35,000, the first quartile \$25,000 and the third, \$50,000.

112. *Suffolk Jewish Directory, 1984-85* (Commack, N.Y.: Suffolk Jewish Communal Planning Council, n.d.), pp. 13-17.

113. Linda Livni, personal interview, September 22, 1981.

114. Ronald Lipetz, personal interview, October 12, 1981.

115. Lloyd Gerard, personal interview, August 4, 1981.

116. Ritterbrand and Cohen, *American Jewish Year Book 1984*, p. 140.

117. The figures gathered in *The Jewish Population of Greater New York: A Profile* (New York: Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, 1984) indicate the difficulty of accuracy in an area where people build second homes for weekend and summer use and where population doubles and even triples between June and September.

118. Ritterbrand and Cohen, *American Jewish Year Book 1984*, p. 129.