

N O T E S

RELATING TO THE CELEBRATION

OF THE

Two Hundred and Fiftieth
Anniversary of the Settlement of
the Jews in the United States



PUBLISHED BY THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION.

Two hundred and fifty years having elapsed since the first settlement of the Jews in the United States, by common accord of those interested in the Jewish people, it has been deemed fitting to celebrate and commemorate this important anniversary.

At a meeting held in the vestry rooms of Shearith Israel Congregation, New York, on April 9th, 1905, which was largely attended, an Executive Committee was appointed to take charge of the celebration, with power to appoint a General Committee to co-operate. Such a committee has been appointed, with representatives in every State and Territory, and in most of the important cities of the Union.

It is an essential feature of the program adopted by the Executive Committee that every Jewish congregation in the United States is to be requested to hold appropriate services on the Saturday (Nov. 25th) preceding the National Thanksgiving Day, 1905, and that every Jewish Sabbath School shall be urged to hold similar services on the Sunday (Nov. 26th) preceding Thanksgiving Day, to the end that the significance of the event which is to be celebrated shall be thoroughly impressed upon every American Jew.

Believing that this object can be best subserved by a thorough understanding, based on accurate information, as to the part which the Jews have played in the development of this nation from the earliest days, the Executive Committee has collated a number of historical facts, which have a direct bearing on American Jewish history, conjoined with a bibliography which will enable those desirous of pursuing further investigations to become possessed of the history, little known but interesting, of the Jewish pioneer. Coupled with these notes, the Committee has, through the courtesy of the Funk & Wagnalls Company, been enabled to reprint from the "Jewish En-

cyclopedia," published by that company, a comprehensive article on "America," and a section of another article on "New York," (the former as a separate pamphlet), both of which are replete with valuable information.

It has also been considered appropriate to reprint from *The American Hebrew* an address delivered on April 29th, 1905, before the "Judaicans," as exemplifying the point of view from which this celebration is to be approached, and to point the moral, that whilst every American Jew is profoundly grateful for the liberties which he enjoys, in common with all other citizens, under the Constitution and laws of the United States, he does not regard those blessings as a mere gift from others, but as of right his, because his ancestors were among the early settlers and pioneers of this country, were active in its development, fought for its independence and preservation, and, because to the full extent of his power, he has contributed to its greatness.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

NOTES

RELATING TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE 250th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SET- TLEMENT OF THE JEWS IN THE UNITED STATES.

I.

The year 1655 stands forth as a convenient landmark for celebration of Jewish settlement in the United States by reason of the issuance of a "Grant of Privileges," on April 26th, 1655, by the Dutch West India Company. This grant of privileges, issued in answer to remonstrances from Gov. Stuyvesant, reads as follows:

Grant of Privileges
Commemorated.

"26th of April, 1655.

"We would have liked to agree to your wishes and request that the new territories should not be further invaded by people of the Jewish race, for we foresee from such immigration the same difficulties which you fear, but after having further weighed and considered the matter, we observe that it would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil, and also because of the large amount of capital which they have invested in shares of this company. After many consultations we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by said Portuguese Jews, that they shall have permission to sail to and trade in New Netherland and to live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will govern yourself accordingly."

(Daly's "Settlement of the Jews in North America," p. 9, note, copied from "Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York," Vol. XIV., p. 315, also "Publications American Jewish Hist. Society," VI., p. 86.)

II.

There were stray Jewish arrivals within the present limits of the United States before the party of twenty-three arrived at New Amsterdam about Sept. 1st, 1654, concerning whom, in particular, these instructions were issued, but they do not seem to have arrived in considerable numbers nor under any express authorization.

(See article "America," by Dr. Cyrus Adler, in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. I., reprint of which accompanies this pamphlet.)

There were also very extensive early Jewish settlements in South America long before this period, though made originally by "Maranos" (secret Jews, living ostensibly as Catholics, owing to the laws against Jewish residence), but these settlements had now (1655) practically ceased to exist.

(See, for particulars as to "Participation of Jews in the Discovery and Early Settlement of South America," besides the article "America" above referred to, *Jewish Encyclopedia* articles "America, The Discovery of" (by Dr. M. Kayserling); "Brazil" (by L. Hühner), "Bahia" (by L. Hühner), "Recife" (by L. Hühner), "South and Central America" (by Joseph Jacobs and Elkan Adler), "Chile" (by Rev. George A. Kohut), "Cuba" (by Max J. Kohler), "Curacao" (by Dr. H. Friedenwald), "Barbados" (by Dr. H. Friedenwald), and "Jamaica" (by Max J. Kohler), also Dr. M. Kayserling's "Christopher Columbus and the Participation of the Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese Discoveries," translated by Dr. Charles Gross; "The Colonization of America by the Jews," by Dr. M. Kayserling (*Pub. Am. Jew. Hist. Society II.*); "Columbus in Jewish Literature," by Prof. R. J. H. Gottheil (*Id. II.*); "The Earliest Rabbis and Jewish Writers in America," by Dr. M. Kayserling (*Id. III.*); "Early Jewish Literature in America," by Rev. G. A. Kohut (*Id. III.*); "Trial of Jorge de Almeida by the Inquisition in America," by Dr. Cyrus Adler (*Id. IV.*); "Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America," by Rev. Geo. A. Kohut (*Id. IV.*); "Isaac Aboab, the first Jewish Author in America," by Dr. M. Kayserling (*Id. V.*); "Trial of Gabriel de Granada, by the Inquisition in Mexico 1642-1645," translated by David Ferguson and edited by Dr. Cyrus Adler (*Id. VII.*); "The Inquisition in Peru," by Elkan N. Adler (*Id. XII.*); "Castelar's 'Life of Columbus'" (see Jewish references extracted in *Publications Am. Jew. Hist. Society, VIII.*, pp. 2-5, X., 159-163); Daly's "Settlement of the Jews in North America" (pp. xi-xviii.); Magnus's "Outlines of Jewish History" (*Jew. Pub. Society edition*, pp. 334-340); Markens: "The Hebrews in America."

The fact is to be noted that Jews not only accompanied Columbus on his first voyage, but that the Maranos, Luis de Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez were among his chief patrons and largely provided the funds for his voyage. As Prof. Herbert B. Adams (*Johns Hopkins Studies, X*, p. 486) has well said, in summarizing Dr. Kayserling's investigations, "not jewels but Jews were the basis for Columbus' first expedition." Accordingly, it is not strange that Columbus' first accounts of his discovery were in the form of letters addressed by him to Santangel and Sanchez.

III.

The importance of this Dutch Grant of Leave of Settlement lies largely in the fact that at this time (1655) nearly all of Western Europe was closed to the Jews. Spain had expelled them in 1492, Portugal following her example soon after, and the Inquisition was engaged in enforcing these decrees of expulsion. In England the decree of expulsion of King Edward I. of July 18th, 1290, was deemed to be still in force, though Menasseh ben Israel presented his "Humble Address" to Cromwell in September of this very year, 1655, and the "Whitehall Conference" which Cromwell convened in December, 1655, resolved that there was nothing in the English laws against the Jews residing in England, though nothing definite came for the time being of plans for an affirmative grant of leave of settlement.

Contemporaneous
Jewish Disabilities
Western Europe.

(See Lucien Wolf: "Menasseh ben Israel and His Mission to Oliver Cromwell," and Joseph Jacobs' article "England" in "Jewish Encyclopedia.")

Similarly, in France, edicts of exclusion were in force against the Jews (see article "France" in the "Jewish Encyclopedia"), as also in many sections of Germany. The Netherlands alone, of Western Europe, recognized Jewish rights, after they had succeeded in wresting their own liberties, civil and religious, from Spanish despotism, and, beginning about 1593, began to welcome Jewish settlement in various localities [Graetz: "History of the Jews" (Eng. transl., Vol. IV., p. 650, et seq.), and Jew. Ency. article "Netherlands"], particularly in Amsterdam, whose constituent "chamber" of the Dutch West India Company had charge of the colonial possessions in Brazil and New Netherlands. The exceptional position of Amsterdam in this respect, at practically the same time that it afforded a haven of rest to the persecuted Puritans, is aptly characterized by Judge Daly in his "Settlement of the Jews in North America" (p. 3) as follows:

Amsterdam the
Exception.

"Amsterdam presented the spectacle of a city where all religions were tolerated, and where men of all shades of political opinion found themselves secure in their persons and property. By a writer of that day it was stigmatized as 'a common harbor of all opinions and of all heresies.' By another, in the figurative

language then in fashion, 'as a cage of unclean birds,' and even Andrew Marvel, the friend of Milton and the incorruptible patriot, wrote a derisive poem upon Holland, in which Amsterdam was described with its mixed population of 'Turk, Christian, Pagan, Jew,' its 'bank of conscience,' where 'all opinions found credit and exchange,' closing his poem with a line which he certainly meant in no spirit of compliment:

"The universal church is only there."

Compare Jewish experiences in early Maryland.

(Prof. J. H. Hollander: "Some Unpublished Material Relating to Dr. Jacob Lumbroso" (Pub. I., 25 et seq.), and "Civil Status of Jews in Maryland, 1634-1776," (Pub. II., 33 et seq.)

Contrast, however, such utterances as Roger Williams', specifically demanding Jewish emancipation,

(Oscar S. Straus: "Life of Roger Williams" (pp. 110, 111), quoted also in M. J. Kohler: "The Jews in Newport" (Pub. Am. Jew. Hist. Society, VI., 65.)

and also those of a few other of Cromwell's contemporaries (Wolf: "Menasseh ben Israel," p. xviii, et seq.), including John Milton, in contradistinction to those of such types of contemporary American Puritanism as Cotton Mather, who in his "Magnalia" characterized Roger Williams' settlement at Newport, where Jews were welcomed soon after 1655, for this very reason as "the common receptacle of the convicts of Jerusalem and the outcasts of the land" (quoted in Pub. Am. Jew. Hist. Society VI., 65-6). On the general subject of Dutch liberality in this respect, see Daly's "Settlement" Introduction, p. xiv and p. 4; "Publications" Am. Jew. Hist. Society VI., 81 et seq. "Civil Status of the Jews in Colonial New York" and Douglass Campbell: "The Puritan in England, Holland and America").

On America's contributions to civilization as pioneer in establishing Religious Liberty, with particular reference to the Jews, see "Phases in the History of Religious Liberty in America," with Special Reference to the Jews," by M. J. Kohler, in "Pub. Am. Jew. Hist. Society, XI., 53 et seq., quoting David Dudley Field and Judge Simeon E. Baldwin, note p. 59; Oscar S. Straus: "Religious Liberty in the United States" and also his "Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America," Second Edition, with Introductory Essay by Emile de Laveleye, translated from the French edition. See this work also for development of the theory of American indebtedness to the Hebrew for the origin of Republican form of government.

America as Pioneer
in Separation of
Church and State.

IV.

The pronounced success and prosperity of the Jews in Holland is indicated in the works already cited and the bibliographies forming a part of the several Jewish Encyclopedia articles. Holland and the Jews.

(Compare article "Commerce," by Joseph Jacobs in "Jewish Encyclopedia," Herzfeld's "Handelsgeschichte der Juden," Roscher: "Die Juden im Mittelalter" (in "Ansichten der Volkswirtschaft," II., 321 et seq.), M. J. Kohler: "Jewish Activity in American Colonial Commerce" (in Pub. Am. Jew. Hist. Society, X., p. 47), and Israel Zangwill: "What Have the Hebrews Accomplished?" "Success," May, 1902.)

Their activities in the Dutch West India Company, as heavy stockholders and directors, and as influential in directing its fortunes from the start, are matters of record.

(Grant of privileges of April 26, 1655, quoted above; Daly: "Settlement of the Jews in North America," pp. xv.-xvii., 5, 9; article on "Netherlands" in "Jewish Encyclopedia," and works cited in bibliographical note thereto.)

V.

The circumstances under which this "Grant of Privileges" was issued, and the evolution of the Jewish community of New York, the oldest, and, to day, by far the largest within the present limits of the United States, are concisely outlined in the "Jewish Encyclopedia," article "New York" (by Max J. Kohler), where the subject is treated more fully than was possible in the article "America." The following is the section of this article, dealing with the Jews of New York to the year 1812, which is reprinted by permission of the Funk & Wagnalls Co. : The Jews in Early New York—A Typical Development.

THE JEWS IN NEW YORK PRIOR TO 1812.*

By Max J. Kohler.

NEW YORK: Chief commercial city of the State of New York and the largest city of the United States; contains a larger Jewish population than any other city in the world.

History: When Jews settled in New York, about 1654, during the Dutch period, the Jewish population of Holland was very small, and New York's Jewish settlers were largely Sephardic exiles from Brazil and the West Indies, with an appreciable sprinkling of Ashkenazim from Holland, and, subsequently, from England. England, to which country Jews were re-admitted soon after, had only a small Jewish population, and accordingly there were few Jewish immigrant settlers from that country during the period of English dominion, from 1664 to the close of the Revolution. It was only from the beginning of the 19th century, when the German tide of immigration to America became strong, carrying in its wake a Polish Jewish immigration, that the Jewish population of New York was heavily augmented. A new influx began about 1881, when Russian persecution drove hundreds of thousands of Jews to America's shores, Roumanian persecution during the last five years further augmenting the number. The history of the growth of the New York Jewry falls therefore into three periods; the first runs to 1812, when it numbered approximately five hundred souls; next, the period of German immigration, runs to about 1881; the third period, that of Russian immigration, extends from that date to the present time (1904), when the Jewish population of the city is estimated at 672,776.

The Dutch Period (1654-64): It was fortunate for American Jewry that the territory of New York, then known as New Netherlands, was a Dutch possession in 1654. This was so, not merely because some of the most enterprising of the Jews who fled from Brazil in that year, upon the Dutch capitulation, were enabled to look with considerable confidence to Dutch hospitality

*From the article on "New York" in the "Jewish Encyclopedia," Volume IX., written by Max J. Kohler, Corresponding Secretary of the American Jewish Historical Society. Copyright, 1906, by Funk & Wagnalls Co.

there, but because the more liberal and modern Dutch laws continued in theory and in practice to confer greater rights and privileges upon Jewish residents in New York under the English conquerors than England herself granted for many decades after. But Jewish relations to the Dutch colony of New Netherland, considerably antedated the first settlement of Jews there. When the Dutch West India Company was formed in 1620, Jews became influential stockholders, and began immediately to exert an important influence upon the shaping of the company's fortunes.

When the Dutch were finally expelled from Brazil, in 1654, several thousand Jews resident there felt compelled to take to flight, and a party of twenty-three of these fugitives arrived at New Amsterdam on the ship "Saint Caterina" in Sept., 1654, and formed the first considerable avowedly Jewish settlement within the present limits of the United States; they seem to have come via the West Indies. There were, doubtless, a few isolated Jewish immigrants to North America prior to this date. In fact, it is known that one Jacob Barsimson arrived in New Amsterdam from Holland on the ship "Pear Tree" in July, 1654, and there are references to several Jews having left Holland for New Netherlands in 1652.

In the case of the party from Brazil, their advent was at once signalized by legal proceedings against them; they had made themselves jointly responsible to the officers of the vessel for the passage money of each, and several of the party were unable to pay their fares, most probably because they had been despoiled of their effects before arrival. The municipal authorities, on the application of the captain, found themselves finally compelled to direct the imprisonment of two of the number, after the sale of the effects of the party, until the money due had been paid. In these proceedings, reference was made to remittances which some of the party shortly expected from Holland, while some had already paid their own passage money and were required by the agreement to pay for others; so it is not fair to infer that all these arrivals were indigent. While these cases were still pending, another party of Jews, of greater means, arrived from Holland. These proceedings, and probably personal bigotry and irascibility, led Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch Governor of New Netherlands, to order them to leave the colony, in which course he was abetted by some of his associates.

But before these orders could be executed, instructions of a liberal character from the directors of the Dutch West India Company arrived, superseding local orders against the Jews. Stuyvesant's ire may have been aroused by the report that more Jews were expected shortly from Holland, who would "then build here a synagogue." Under date of April 26th, 1655, the directors of the Dutch West India Company instructed Stuyvesant that the prohibition of Jewish settlement recommended by him "would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable losses sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil, and also because of the large amount of capital which they have invested in shares of this company. . . . They shall have permission to sail to and trade in New Netherlands and to live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or the community, but be supported by their own nation."

Stuyvesant vouchsafed only a grudging assent to these instructions, and declined to permit one of these early Jewish settlers, Salvator d'Andrade, to purchase a house and lot in New Amsterdam, curtailed the right of Abraham de Lucena and others to send goods for purposes of trade to the Delaware River, and levied a special military tax on Jewish settlers, despite their protests, in Aug., 1655, Jews not being permitted to mount guard with other citizens. Further Jewish appeals to the directors at home resulted in a vigorous reproof to Stuyvesant, coupled with more specific directions in favor of Jewish settlers, expressly providing that they should enjoy all the civil and political rights in New Netherlands which were accorded them in Amsterdam, and including express authorization to acquire real estate and to trade in the adjacent districts. The specific limitations upon their rights contained in these instructions were fraught with important consequences, however, and should be noted:

"Jews or Portuguese people, however, shall not be employed in any public service (to which they are neither admitted in this city), nor allowed to have open retail shops; but they may quietly and peacefully carry on their business as beforesaid and exercise in all quietness their religion within their houses, for which end they must without doubt endeavor to build their houses close together in a convenient place on one or the other side of New Amsterdam—at their choice—as they have done here."

The prohibition against engaging in retail trade compelled Jewish residents to direct their energies particularly to foreign and inter-colonial trade, which resulted in pecuniary profit, not merely to themselves, but also to the whole colony, for they were peculiarly well situated for opening such commercial intercourse with their brethren, scattered all over the world, having common ties of language, blood and mutual confidence, and dealing in the most varied articles. Jews were accordingly the pioneers of this trade in New Netherlands, and continued throughout the whole colonial period, to be among the most prominent importers and exporters. So far as the establishment of a ghetto is concerned, there is no reason to believe that this provision was ever enforced, and Jews resided at will throughout the territorial limits. The provision concerning their religious worship did not forbid the private practice of their rites, but only the public establishment of a synagogue, which had been the particular grievance of the local authorities. The consequence is that the origin of the religious gatherings of the little community is shrouded in darkness, though indications are that private religious worship began about 1654, immediately after their arrival. That the settlers joined in efforts to observe the ceremonies of their faith from the date of their arrival is certain, for it is known that in July, 1655, they applied to the municipal authorities for a grant of land for a burying ground, which application was refused on the ground that there was no present need for it. The need soon arose, however, and on July 14th, 1656, a lot was granted them "for a place of interment," apparently without charge, the site of which Judge Daly shows was on New Bowery, near Oliver Street, and which the Jewish community augmented by the purchase of adjoining tracts in 1681, 1729 and 1755. The oldest decipherable inscription on the tombstones in this cemetery is that upon the grave of Benjamin Bueno de Mesquita, dated 1683, one Joseph Bueno, presumably of the same family, having purchased the tract acquired in 1681.

In 1657 one of these early settlers, Asser Levy, applied for the burgher right, which was essential to the carrying on of certain vocations, and showed that he exercised such right in Amsterdam, but he found that it was necessary to appeal to the director-general and council before an order (April 26th, 1657), admitting Jews to citizenship was obtained, the municipal authorities having denied the application. A few days before this determination

on appeal, an application of one Jacob Cohen-Hendricus, "to bake and sell bread within this city, as other bakers, but with closed doors," was denied by the Court of Burgomasters, as contrary to the privileges granted to the burghers by the director-general and council, and against the orders of the lord mayors. Whether this determination was reversed by the Asser Levy decision, admitting Jews to burgher rights, or was persisted in, so that the baking and selling of bread were regarded as one of the fields of retail trade closed to the Jews under the instructions from the directors of the company, cannot be definitely determined.

By this time the Jews had acquired definite and valuable rights, even though somewhat restricted, and even the municipal authorities began to treat them liberally. Thus, on June 3d, 1658, the Court of Burgomasters, apparently on its own initiative, declined to permit judgment in civil actions to be taken against Jacob Barsimson, a Jew, holding that "though defendant is absent, yet no default is entered against him, as he was summoned on his Sabbath"; an instance of religious toleration and just dealing foreshadowing a New York statute of two centuries later that made it a misdemeanor maliciously to serve anyone with process on his Sabbath, or with process returnable on that day. (N. Y. Penal Code, Sec. 271.) Similarly, the municipal authorities licensed Asser Levy and Moses Lucena, October, 1660, as sworn butchers, providing on their application that they might take the oath at the hands of the officer "agreeably to the oath of the Jews," and with the reservation that they should not be bound to kill any hogs.

English Period (1664-1776): Charles II. having granted New York to his brother James, subsequently James II., the fleet sent out in 1664 under Colonel Nicolls succeeded in seizing the colony; and the articles of capitulation guaranteed to all residents the rights of free denizens, and all their property rights, and provided that the Dutch there should enjoy liberty of conscience. It was apparently because of these terms, confirmed by the Treaty of Breda in 1667, that Jewish residents continued in their established rights under the new order, although the same effects result from the principle of English law that conquered territory continues to be governed by its former laws, except in so far as expressly changed by law. As Governor, Nicolls, in 1665, promulgated the "Duke's Laws," which contained a clause safe-

guarding religious rights, but which, in terms, referred only to persons "who profess Christianity." Governor Andros' instructions of 1674 were not so limited, and in an official report in 1678, he refers to the presence of some Jews in the colony. Governor Dongan's first instructions again contained this limitation, and in 1683 the Colonial Assembly adopted a charter of liberties, which was also limited, in its clause as to immunity from religious persecution to persons "who professed faith in God by Jesus Christ," though this clause was purely negative.

In 1685 two determinations were reached concerning the Jews, both antagonistic; one concerned the application of Saul Brown to trade at retail, which was denied, though he was permitted to engage in wholesale trade with the governor's consent; the other ruling, made by the mayor and common council on application of the Jews for liberty to exercise their religion, was to the effect "that no public worship is tolerated by Act of Assembly, but to those that profess faith in Christ, and therefore the Jews' worship is not to be allowed." It will be observed that this ruling is limited to "*public*" worship, and is based upon the local act of assembly, and Judge Daly suggests that Governor Dongan, who was a liberal and enlightened man, may have taken advantage of the absence of such limitation in his second set of instructions, in 1686, to have authorized public Jewish worship. Some form of semi-private Jewish "separate meetings" already existed, and are referred to in Dominie Selyn's report to the Dutch classis in 1682; and Chaplain John Miller's map of New York in 1695 shows a Jews' synagogue on the south side of Beaver Street, near Mill Street, recording also that Saul Brown (a name found associated with "Morenu"), was its minister, and that the congregation comprised twenty families. By 1700 the site of the synagogue was so well known that in a conveyance of certain premises, the latter were described as adjoining a place "now commonly known by the name of the Jews' Synagogue." Moreover, the public authorities even extended exemption from civil and military service to the ministers of the Jewish congregation, as appears from a petition of Abraham de Lucena to Governor Hunter, dated September 13th, 1710, praying for similar immunities, in consideration of his ministerial functions, and referring to the enjoyment of such privileges by his predecessors. This date, however, almost comes within the period of existing official records of the Congregation

Shearith Israel, of New York, whose minutes begin in 1729 and refer to an earlier constitution of 1706. This congregation dedicated a synagogue on Mill Street in 1730, on a lot purchased two years previously, and for many years thereafter its synagogue, which followed the Sephardic ritual, was the only one in the United States; the synagogue was remodeled and reconstructed in the year 1818.

By the commencement of the eighteenth century, therefore, the last curtailment of religious rights of the Jewish settlers in New York had disappeared. Of their political rights, only a single abridgment is recorded during the 18th century, and that is connected with a bitter political contest of the year 1737. In that year the General Assembly, at the instance of a shrewd lawyer representing one of the contestants, decided that Jews ought not to be admitted to vote for representatives in this colony, as they enjoyed no such rights in England with respect to voting for members of Parliament, and in the course of the same controversy the Assembly further decided that they should not be admitted as witnesses. Even the former determination is of doubtful correctness, for the law of England concerning elections to Parliament did not control; but the ruling that Jews were incompetent as witnesses, which was inconsistent with the colonial precedents, would have been most serious and dangerous in its consequences, had it been generally followed; the context shows, however, that the witnesses under consideration were electors testifying as to their votes in the recent election, so the ruling was, apparently, merely a corollary to the finding that they could not lawfully vote for representatives. Governor Seward has referred to the minutes recording this determination as a "spot which the friends of rational liberty would wish to see effaced."

A poll-list of the election for the General Assembly of 1761 has been handed down, and the names of several Jews are found entered as voters in that year in the city. The prohibition against Jews engaging in retail trade seems to have become obsolete by this time, and the Declaration of Independence and the religious clauses of the first State Constitution of 1777, in establishing complete religious liberty, merely continued as a matter of law, rights of absolute equality already enjoyed in practice by the Jews in New York, though there do not seem to have been any Jewish

incumbents of public office in civil life prior to the adoption of these great charters of public liberty.

The commercial activities of the Jews of New York were very varied. During the first few decades after their settlement they engaged in trade with the West Indies (particularly Curacao, St. Thomas and Jamaica), along the Hudson and Delaware rivers, with Rhode Island, and with Africa, England, Holland, the Madeiras and Portugal. A bill of lading of jewelry shipped from Curacao to New Netherlands, dated 1658, a Jew being the importer, has been preserved, as also even earlier references to Jewish importers of tobacco into New York. Under date of 1720 there is mention of the expected arrival in New York of the slave-ship of Simon the Jew, hailing from Guinea. Jews were engaged in exporting wheat from New York on a very large scale about 1710, Lewis Gomez and his family being the principal dealers, and Abraham de Lucena being associated with them in a considerable branch of this business. For several decades the Gomez family seem to have been the most influential Jewish residents. Joseph Bueno was a prominent broker in New York even before the close of the seventeenth century, and it was with particular reference to his services to the governor, Lord Bellomont, that that dignitary wrote to the Board of Trade in 1700, concerning matters of colonial finance, that "were it not for one Dutch merchant and two or three Jews that have let me have money, I should have been undone." In 1705 a petition concerning the fixing of the fair standard value of foreign coins, signed by sixty-six of the most prominent merchants of New York, bore the signatures of Joseph Bueno, Abraham de Lucena and Samuel Levy. Sampson Simson was a member of a delegation of eight appointed to receive the charter of the New York Chamber of Commerce from Lieutenant-Governor Colden in 1770, and some years later (1790), Benjamin Seixas and Ephraim Hart appear among the founders of the New York Stock Exchange. In 1672 one Rabba Couty, of New York, whose ship, "The Trial," had been seized and declared forfeited in Jamaica, on the theory that he was an alien within the meaning of the Navigation Act, though he was admittedly a Jewish burgher of New York, secured a reversal of this decree in England on his appeal to the Council for Trade; this decision is of great importance, not merely as recognizing the

Jews as British subjects, but because it seems to be the first case in which efficacy was allowed to colonial grants of naturalization.

During the French and Indian War, Jacob Franks, of New York, was the provision agent for the Crown to the British forces in America, he having been associated with a British syndicate, consisting of Colebrook, Nesbitt and Franks, whose dealings with the Crown during this period exceeded £750,000; the Franks family was one of the leading ones in the New York Jewish community of the eighteenth century. Hayman Levy, of New York, the employer of John Jacob Astor, was very largely engaged in the fur trade with the Indians shortly before the American Revolution; and the commercial dealings of Sampson and Judah Simson were also very extensive.

An incident illustrative of the generosity of the early New York Jewish community and of its friendly relations with other communions was brought to light when a subscription-list for raising funds for building a steeple for Trinity Church in 1711 was discovered; it contains a separate list, entitled "The Jews' Contributions," aggregating £5 12sh. 3d from seven subscribers, including the rabbi, de Lucena, the total amount subscribed being £312.

The cosmopolitan character of the Jewish population of New York from early times on is indicated by an article written by a local Christian clergyman, Rev. John Sharpe, in 1712, who refers to there being Jewish residents of New York at that day from Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc. In fact, in 1784, a majority of the electors of the Shearith Israel congregation, more commonly known as the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, were Ashkenazim, not Sephardim. After the date of this congregation's purchase of land for its synagogue in Mill Street, 1728, there are records giving the names of its successive ministers and lay officials; at the time of the consecration of the synagogue in 1730, Moses Gomez, son of Lewis Gomez, was president, his father having acted in that capacity at the time the land was purchased; Moses Lopez de Fonseca was then rabbi. The name of Joseph Jessurun Pinto, who officiated as rabbi from 1759 to 1766, is identified with the earliest New York religious publication devoted to Jewish interests handed down to us—a form of prayer for a Thanksgiving Day service, appointed in 1760, to celebrate the English con-

quest of Canada. This was published in the same year in an English translation.

In 1766 a book of prayers for the holy days, according to the order of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, and translated into English by Isaac Pinto, was published in New York. The translator of this work was a relative of the rabbi just referred to. It is of special interest, not merely because it was probably the first Jewish book published in New York, but because its publication was forbidden by the synagogal authorities in London, who were opposed to anything tending to establish the reading of Jewish prayers in the vernacular. Such tendencies as these probably gave rise to the society Mezion Teza Torah, established in connection with this synagogue in 1731 for the purpose of perpetuating the old ritual. The old entries in the congregational minutes show that the elaborate system, to which were attached the penalties of fines, reprimands and possible expulsion, employed in Amsterdam and London to secure conformity with the ceremonial laws, was continued in New York. An increase in the number of violations of the dietary laws resulted in the adoption of a by-law in 1758 providing for the expulsion of persons eating "trefah" or breaking the Sabbath. In 1729 the annual expenses of the congregation aggregated only £91; by 1746 they had risen to £268, the congregation having then fifty-one members, each of whom originally undertook to contribute £2 per annum, but as this did not suffice, assessments based on individual fortunes were levied, which gave way to the present purchase and rental of pews system, supplemented by voluntary contributions. Connected with the congregation was a school which at first held sessions every afternoon, but in 1746 held both morning and afternoon sessions. The English branches of study, as well as sectarian instruction, constituted the curriculum, and provision was made for the free instruction of poor children, so that this school is remarkable as, at the same time, one of the oldest and one of the most comprehensive in the colony. The Jewish community directed the administration of its charities exclusively through congregational channels until the commencement of the nineteenth century, its "Zedakah" (charity) fund being originally under the sole administration of its president, though in 1756 the rules were amended to forbid his disbursement of over £20 for charity without the consent of the Board of Trustees. An inter-

esting contemporary account of the Jewish community of New York in 1748, from the pen of the Swedish naturalist, Peter Kalm, has been preserved, which includes a description of divine service in the synagogue:

"There are many Jews settled in New York who possess great privileges. They have a synagogue and houses, and great country-seats of their own property, and are allowed to keep shops in town. They have, likewise, several ships which they freight and send out with their own goods. In fine, they enjoy all the privileges common to the other inhabitants of this town and province."

Jews eagerly availed themselves of all possible opportunities to acquire citizenship in New York, as in the Dutch period, when they as eagerly sought burgher rights, after their claim to the privilege had been established. During the English period numerous arrivals secured from the governors, letters of denization and licenses to trade and traffic. A number of years, however, before Parliament passed the Act of 1740, permitting foreign Jews to be naturalized in the colonies, the New York Colonial Assembly freely passed special acts, first applicable to individuals only, then general in character, permitting Jews to be naturalized without including in their oath the words "upon the true faith of a Christian." A large number of Jews in New York thus availed themselves of this opportunity under the colonial and the Parliamentary statutes, including at least one Jew from the colony of Rhode Island, to whom that privilege had been denied by the courts of his colony, under a forced and unreasonable construction of the British Act of 1740. Until the Revolutionary War, the Jewish immigrants came principally from Spain, Portugal and the West Indies, while there was an appreciable migration to Rhode Island and Pennsylvania shortly before the end of the English period. Further shrinkage was due to defections toward Christianity through intermarriage, and the ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish population decreased considerably during the period from 1750 to 1812, chiefly because of the immense non-Jewish immigration.

Revolutionary Period: As regards the Revolutionary struggle, Jewish names are found subscribed to the non-importation agreements, that of 1769 containing the names of Samuel Judah, Hayman Levy, Jacob Moses, Jacob Myers and Jonas Phillips.

Benjamin Seixas was an officer in Colonel Lasher's battalion as early as 1775, and Isaac (subsequently Colonel) Franks joined the same regiment the next year. Numerous other Jewish names from New York appear on the Revolutionary rolls, some as officers. Particularly striking was the attitude of the Jewish congregation as such; for, on the eve of the British occupancy of New York, an overwhelming majority resolved to abandon the city and the synagogue. Rabbi Gershom Mendez Seixas, whose patriotism found unmistakable expression, was in the van. Most of the members of the Jewish community took refuge in Philadelphia during the Revolution, aiding there in the erection of the synagogue of the Congregation Mickve Israel, but the majority of its members returned to New York at the close of the war.

During the struggle the services of Isaac Moses, who, aiding Robert Morris, afforded material financial assistance to the Colonial cause, proved particularly valuable. There was, however, a sprinkling of Tories in the New York Jewry during the Revolution, some of whom occasionally held services in the synagogue during the British occupation, under the presidency of Lyon Jonas, and subsequently of Alexander Zuntz, a Hessian officer who settled in New York. On the reorganization of the congregation at the close of the Revolution, Hayman Levy succeeded Alexander Zuntz as president, and the congregation presented an address of congratulation to Governor Clinton on the outcome of the war. G. M. Seixas was one of the fourteen ministers who participated in the inaugural exercises of Washington's administration in New York, on April 30th, 1789, Colonel David S. Franks being one of the marshals in charge of the procession.

Gershom Mendez Seixas became rabbi of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York in 1766, and remained in his rabbinate until his death, in 1816. He became a trustee of Columbia College by legislative appointment under the Act of the Legislature reorganizing the college, and thus evidencing its non-sectarian character, in 1787, and continued to hold that office till he resigned, in 1815. A Thanksgiving Day sermon which he preached on November 26th, 1789, was printed at the time, and a notice of this publication described it as "the first of the kind ever preached in English in this State." Of course, synagogal preaching in those days was very unusual, and Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto, in a public discourse delivered and then

printed in New York in 1830, referred to the fact that this task had been theretofore performed only at intervals, he at the same time paying tribute to his own father's services (Rev. M. L. Peixotto) as Seixas' successor, in delivering occasional discourses on moral and religious subjects. The New York congregation was one of several Jewish congregations which joined in an "Address of Congratulation" to Washington in 1790; the text of this address, as well as Washington's reply, is still extant. A list of the affluent residents of New York in 1799, showing the names of all whose residences were assessed at £2,000 or over, includes the names of Benjamin Seixas, Solomon Simpson, Alexander Zuntz and Ephraim Hart.

The community was somewhat depleted by the loss of those who had settled permanently in Philadelphia, but on the other hand, it received slight accessions from Newport, R. I., during and after the Revolution, as that city never recovered from the injuries it received at the hands of the British during the Revolution. But, as already stated, even at the commencement of the War of 1812 there were not more than about five hundred Jews resident in New York. The close of this period marked the commencement of the movement for the organization of independent Jewish charities, at first under congregational auspices; subsequently these became more and more numerous, and, for the most part, absolutely independent. In 1785 the Hebra Gemilut Hasadim, for burying the dead, was organized, and is still (1904) in existence. In 1801 Myer Polonies bequeathed to the congregation \$900.00 for foundation of a free denominational school, and with this fund subsequently augmented, the Polonies Talmud Thora was soon after founded. In 1802 the Hebra Hased Ve' Amet, now probably the oldest Jewish charitable society in the United States, was organized for visiting the sick and attendance at funerals. In 1805 a new cemetery, in what is now 11th Street, was consecrated by the Shearith Israel Congregation."

VI.

The Jews in the
Various States.

For further particulars concerning the history of the Jews in the United States see the various works cited in the bibliographies of the articles, "America" and "New York," in the "Jewish Encyclopedia," as also the various articles under the names of the various States and large cities, as well as the cross-references; also the twelve volumes of the publications of the American Jewish Historical Society.

VII.

The Early Presidents
and the Jews.

For Correspondence between Jews of America and our early Presidents, Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison, see "Publications" Am. Jew. Hist. Society III., 87-101; IV., 219-222, XI., 63, 66, 68; Compare Simon Wolf: "The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen," especially pp. 53-61, 488-522.

VIII.

Purposes of the
Celebration.

During the week including April 26th, 1905, the "Judæan" Club, of New York, celebrated the 250th Anniversary of Jewish Settlement in America at the Hotel Savoy, and the Introductory Address of a series of addresses then delivered, emphasized the purposes of the celebration. It was delivered by Louis Marshall, Esq., and is herein reprinted from *The American Hebrew* of May 5th, 1905, as follows:

THE JEWS AS ELEMENTS IN THE POPULATION, PAST AND PRESENT.

By Louis Marshall.

It has long been a popular fallacy that the Jew has been a latecomer on American soil; that he has been unwilling to undergo the hardships of the pioneer, or to create new paths for industry and commerce; that his admittance within our gates has been a matter of grace and bounty, and that his rights are inferior in antiquity to those of our population, who have other racial and religious affinities. But when we remember that the settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, was in 1607, that of the Dutch at New Amsterdam in 1614, that of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and that the first settlement of the Jews in New York occurred in 1655, the latter are to be regarded as of equal rank with the most ancient of American settlers.

They are thus the contemporaries of the proud Virginian, of the revered Puritan, and of the substantial Knickerbocker. They preceded the Irish, the German, the Scandinavian, the Hun, the Slav, and the Italian. Their traditions run back to the earliest days of our country's history, and their lineage is traced in unbroken line through all the centuries, through all nations of the earth, to the hills and plains of Palestine.

Nor were the first Jewish settlers who landed in New York, newcomers on this continent. They had previously embarked in commercial enterprises, and founded their homes in Brazil, under the protection of the Dutch Republic, at a period almost contemporaneous with the discovery of the noble stream which bears the name of the daring navigator who first beheld it, at whose confluence with the world's highway, stands this mighty metropolis.

Nor were even they the first of Jewish blood to behold this continent. For there were Jews who accompanied Columbus on his first voyage into the vast immensity of the unknown sea.

They are thus, in the strictest sense of the term, to be classed as American pioneers; not as interlopers, not as exploiters, but as active participants in the upbuilding of the nation.

Their advent into this community was not that of suppliants, or of those coming by sufferance. They had united their fortunes with those of their adopted country—Holland—when they settled under its flag in Brazil; and when the Dutch surrendered to the Portuguese, they sought as a right, and not as a privilege, a new home under that same flag. Their rights were recognized by the Dutch West India Company, which, formed as it was in part by Jewish enterprise, had established the colony. They were declared even against the protests of the intolerant and irascible Stuyvesant, into whose keeping had been placed the fortunes of the New Netherlands. Hearken to these words, uttered six months before Manasseh ben Israel stood before Cromwell to demand the re-admission of the Jews into England, whence they had been excluded for three centuries:

“It would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by the Jews in taking Brazil, and also because of the large amount of capital which they have invested in shares of this company, to exclude them. After many consultations we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by said Portuguese Jews, that they shall have permission to sail and trade in New Netherlands and to live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation.”

Such are the memorable terms of the instructions to the reluctant Stuyvesant, from the directors of the company, which bear date, April 26, 1655, and which may well be called the charter of Jewish liberties in America.

Not only were these early settlers fortified by this grant, based on moral and legal considerations, but by their manhood, their independence, their self-respect and readiness to assert and maintain their rights, they acquired for themselves equal rights of citizenship, although to accomplish that result it was necessary for them to enter into a conflict with hostile and prejudiced official administrators, who sought in every way to curtail their rights.

Thus, they successively demanded and acquired the right to own real property; to carry on their commercial enterprises throughout the colony, from Fort Orange to the Delaware; to exercise their religion within their homes; and finally, in 1657,

Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimson, men of Maccabæan mould, of the same high type of character as that which is admired in the Pilgrim fathers, men of strong moral fibre, not flabby of soul, or cringing and fawning in spirit, petitioned to be allowed to stand guard, like the other burghers, or, if that right were refused, to be relieved from the tax imposed upon their people because of their exemption from military service, which they neither requested nor desired. To attain these rights they were in every instance compelled to appeal to the authorities in Holland. But they prevailed, and Asser Levy—*nomen venerabile*—became the first Jewish citizen within the territory now occupied by the United States.

This is not the occasion for a protracted history of Jewish immigration. Settlers found their way from New York to Rhode Island, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the more southern colonies. Their numbers increased slowly, but their loyalty to the communities in which they lived was unflagging and unswerving. They engaged in commerce extensively. They ranked high as merchants. They contributed to the development of new industries. They entered into trade relations with foreign countries, and with the sparse settlements of the western country.

During the Revolutionary period, with few exceptions, they united their fortunes with those of the infant republic. They fought in the Continental Army. Men like Haym Solomon helped to replenish the empty treasury, and made every sacrifice that patriotism could offer for the cause of country and of home. And when the war was at an end, and the new government was formed, Washington recognized their fidelity, and assured them that "all possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship."

They were not interlopers, or newcomers. John Jacob Astor, the founder of the princely family which to-day stands at the head of New York society, was employed at a dollar a day in 1786, to beat furs, by Hayman Levy. This constitutes no blot on the family escutcheon. It merely serves to show that in point of antiquity, respectability and good citizenship, we can vie with the most ancient of American aristocracy.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Jews of America were largely of Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch descent. Some Jews had come from Poland and Germany, but the

principal influx of German and Polish Jews did not occur until toward the middle of the century. Those who came were, as a rule, young or middle aged, limited in means, strong of heart, courageous and ambitious, persevering, industrious; men and women endowed with high moral principles and deep religious convictions. They came with the desire to found homes in the new land; to give of their strength to their new country; to shrink from no sacrifice which would tend to demonstrate that they could maintain their Judaism, and at the same time become the most American of the Americans.

There is not a field in the entire range of commerce and of professional life, which they and their descendants have not occupied and developed. Every branch of manufacture has been stimulated and improved by them. They have penetrated into the depths of the mountains with their mines, and their products float on every sea. They have contributed to the building of cities in every State. Their offspring reflect honor on every school, and on every department of intellectual endeavor. During the Civil War they shed their blood for the preservation of the Union. Their hearts, their hands, and their fortunes have become inseparably united with those of the city, the state, and the nation which they call their own. Their loyalty has never been questioned, and their pride in American institutions is immeasurable in its intensity, because those institutions are the only political ones that they have been able to call their own, since the days of the dispersion.

In 1880 the number of Jews in the city of New York did not exceed 100,000. Since then, owing to the unspeakable horrors of Russian and Roumanian oppression, and of the dire poverty in Galicia, the tide of Jewish immigration has increased in volume year after year, until to-day the Jewish population of New York City amounts to well nigh 750,000, and that of the United States to upwards of 1,250,000, and the numbers are constantly increasing.

Many of these new arrivals have not as yet attained the highest standard of citizenship, are still struggling with poverty and misery, are yet unacquainted with our vernacular, and have brought with them unfamiliar customs, strange tongues, and ideas which are the product of centuries of unexampled persecution.

But what of that! They have come to this country with the

pious purpose of making it their home; of identifying themselves and their children with its future; of worshipping under its protection, according to their consciences; of becoming its citizens; of loving it; of giving to it their energies, their intelligence, their persistent industry.

The Pilgrim Fathers did no more than this. The progenitors of the leading families of this country were not otherwise. The lineage of the Russian Jew runs back much further than theirs. He is the descendant of men who were renowned for learning and for intellectual achievements, when from the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande, from Sandy Hook to the Golden Gate, this was a howling wilderness.

The Russian Jew is rapidly becoming the American Jew, and we shall live to see the time when the present dwellers in the tenements will, through their thrift and innate moral powers, hitherto repressed and benumbed, step into the very forefront of the great army of American citizenship.

When the first Jewish settlers landed in the village of New Amsterdam they were also poor, wretched and miserable. Their goods were insufficient for their passage money. Each had stood as surety for the other, and each stood prepared to stand as a hostage for his brother. Like the famous Musqueteers, their motto was: "One for all, and all for one."

This is a wholesome thought for the Jews of the present generation. It is well that we commemorate not only the fact of settlement, but also the conditions and circumstances which surrounded the pioneers. If they in their misery did not shrink from the responsibility of brotherhood, we would be contemptible beyond expression, if, in our prosperity, we should shrink from a like sacrifice. The proudest title of distinction that the Jews of New York have thus far achieved lies in the fact that they have hitherto sacredly observed and strictly performed the condition imposed upon them 250 years ago, in the charter of their liberties, of seeing to it that "the poor among them should not become a burden to the community, but should be supported by their own nation."

Although the Dutch West India Company, which imposed that obligation, has long since disappeared; though the flag of Holland has been lowered before the flag of Great Britain, and the flag of that powerful nation has vanished before the glory

of the stars and stripes, the moral obligation accepted by the first Jewish settlers, and which has been assumed as a charge by each succeeding generation, remains in as full force and virtue to-day, as it did in the dawn of our American life, sanctioned by the unimpairable behests of religion and humanity, and hallowed by blessed memories.

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