

# The Origin and Growth of the Jewish Community of Quincy, Massachusetts

By Bob Bloomberg



Quincy – 1892, Frederick Childe Hassam

In 1893, Charles Francis Adams, the grandson and great-grandson of presidents, moved from his home in Quincy to Lincoln, Massachusetts. This was not an easy decision for him. “Quincy was bone of my bone—flesh of the Adams flesh,” he wrote. “I felt I owned the town.” His ancestors had resided there for nearly 250 years, and he and his family had lived there since the end of the Civil War. Yet he never regretted the move, and called it a “blessing.” Why would he take such a drastic step, one that caused so much emotional anguish? His answer:

“The Quincy I knew has ceased to exist; and with the present Quincy, I have neither ties nor sympathy. In fact, I never go there without, as I come away, drawing a breath of deep relief. When I enter it, I seem

going into a tomb; when I leave it, getting back to Lincoln, it is a return to the sunlight and living air.”<sup>1</sup>

R.P. Blackmur, in his biography of Charles’ brother Henry, said Charles made the move to escape “an urbanized and cheapened” Quincy.<sup>2</sup>

In Adams’ view, something had happened in Quincy that changed it dramatically. It was the “Alien Infusion”, the title of Chapter XXI of his Three Episodes of Massachusetts History. As early as 1837, he says, there were 500 men employed in the quarries. Most were foreign born Catholics. They voted Democratic; nearly everyone else was a Federalist. With their presence, he lamented that “the downfall of the local gentry influence [in politics] was a mere question of time.” The inrush of foreign elements unsettled everything, completely changing the character of the town. “It was a change also for the worse, because the new leaders were “noisy”, “unmethodical”, “in reality incompetent”, and “much too often intemperate... Accordingly, neither the business record nor the moral record of the town was now credible.”<sup>3</sup>

Adams was wrong on two counts. First, the reality was that Quincy in 1893 was very much the same place it had been for the previous 60 years. Protestant men dominated every aspect of the town: politics, town administration, society, mores, and culture. There was, and had been, a small Irish minority that was growing in population and influence, yet even in the 1890’s they had by no means displaced, nor even threatened, Protestant hegemony. There were very few ethnics in Quincy at that time, certainly none in numbers that could have caused Adams the angst that he expressed.

The transition Adams wrote about came later, starting slowly in the late 1880’s, picking up speed and substance in the very early 1900’s, peaking before World War I, and leveling out by the mid 1920’s. This second

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<sup>1</sup>Quotes taken from Adams, Charles Francis, Charles Francis Adams 1835-1915 An Autobiography. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston 1916 pp. 202-204

<sup>2</sup> Blackmur, R.P., Henry Adams. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, NY, p. 287-8

<sup>3</sup> Adams, Charles Francis, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History, Vol. II, Revised, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston, pp. 946-950

wave of immigration (Adams' "alien infusion") changed Quincy from a small, rural town with one major industry (granite) into one of the largest, fastest growing and most diverse cities in the state in both population and industry. In turn, the immigrants were changed by their Quincy experience, becoming "Americanized" while retaining strong, vibrant ethnic identities.

And, second and most importantly, the new influx of immigrants changed Quincy for the better. Their very numbers forced Quincy to think differently about itself, to modernize, to adapt to new ideas and cultures. Not that Quincy fiercely resisted. There was tension and prejudice at times, and immigrant needs were not always at the forefront of Quincy thinking. But looked at as a whole, between 1885 and 1925, the two Quincys (Protestant and everyone else) that Adams foreshadowed and feared became an inseparable whole. This is the history of the Jewish portion of that transition from town to city

Quincy officially became a city in 1888. Its population of 12,145<sup>1</sup> placed it as only the 27<sup>th</sup> largest community in the state. In the mid 1880's the *Quincy Advertiser* often pointed out that Quincy had not gone past the small-town stage. The streets were generally not paved and were very muddy; there were no sewers, and piped in water was brand new. Living conditions in the poorer areas, where most of the newcomers settled, were deplorable: pig sties, privies, cesspools and wells were side by side. Some streets smelled horribly.

But Quincy was rapidly expanding because it possessed several advantages for growth. It was only a short distance from Boston, a major port of entry; it had an established and flourishing granite industry which had already attracted immigrants seeking work; it had 27 miles of shoreline which provided easy access to transportation and markets; and it had plenty of land available to settle and build on.<sup>2</sup> It was thus ideally placed to change from a small, mostly rural, homogenous community into a thriving multi-industrial, ethnically and culturally diverse city.

The largest increases were among the “new” immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Finland, Russia and Asia. For the most part they were Catholic, but not Irish Catholic, and Jewish, not Protestant. They had fewer marketable skills than the older immigrants, and were poorer.<sup>3</sup> They congregated in overcrowded and often unsanitary tenements, where they remained insulated and insular. Worst of all, from the perspective of the native population, they neither understood nor appreciated American ideals and customs. These differences went a long way toward defining the attitude of the native population toward immigrants and immigration.

In the early 1880's the first Jewish settlers came to Quincy, mostly from Russia, but it was not until ten years later that the ten men required to form a minyan were available. Most of the early Jewish residents were

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts State Census, 1875 and 1885

<sup>2</sup> Tracy, James, “The Rise and Fall of the Know-Nothings in Quincy”, *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, January, 1988 pp. 1-19

<sup>3</sup> The inability to speak English was not merely an inconvenience to the immigrant, or an annoyance to the native, because the 1907 immigration law made it a requirement for citizenship that the applicant speak English.

peddlers and junk dealers. Ahavath Achim, the first synagogue in Quincy, was organized in 1890. The first synagogue building was dedicated in 1903, and was located on Water St. Rabbi Julius Sandlovitz served as the Rabbi there for over fifty years, starting his rabbinate at the age of 19. The congregation followed the Orthodox religious beliefs and customs of its founders.<sup>4</sup>

As the Jewish population grew rapidly, Quincy slowly began to acknowledge their presence. One of the earliest mentions of Jews in Quincy was in 1890. In a report on District Court cases, Herman Eastman, identified as “a Jew”, was said to have been selling shirts in the city. Claiming that he was going to open a store in Quincy, he ran up a large bill on a New York firm. It was a scam. After his scheme was uncovered, Eastman was said to have reimbursed the company and then was allowed to leave the city.<sup>5</sup>

A picnic of 600 “Hebrew” children was held at Quincy Point in 1892. Although the children were not Quincyites, it is notable that the paper reported positively on it.<sup>6</sup> In 1893, two “Boston Jews” reported a theft of \$42 from their store which had opened only the week before at Copeland and Cross Streets in Quincy.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for history nothing more is heard of these two businessmen. The first newspaper advertisements for a Jewish owned firm appeared in 1894. One of the earliest—if not *the* first—was for Grossman’s, which sold clothing.<sup>8</sup> The store was located at 97 Water St. Two years later the Grossman ad referred to its location as the “Grossman block,” an indication that it was a prosperous and expanding concern. In 1895, Louis Grossman purchased the Nightingale estate in South Quincy at auction.

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<sup>4</sup> Speech by Arthur J. Gabel to the Quincy Historical Society (“QHS”), March 23, 1962, unpublished MS at the QHS, pp.3-4. Rabbi Jacob Mann (likely author), unpublished MS at the QHS, “The Jews of Quincy”, 1975, p.1. See also Alfred F. Stern, “Jewish Residents Have Made Their Mark Here”, article in the Quincy Patriot ledger, 1938, at the QHS.

<sup>5</sup> *The Quincy Patriot*, October 10, 1890, p.3

<sup>6</sup> *The Quincy Patriot*, August 20, 1892, p.2

<sup>7</sup> *The Quincy Patriot*, January 28, 1893, p.2

<sup>8</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, January 9, 1894, p.2

It is clear from the errors in the articles about Jews in these early years that the writers were not familiar with the newly arrived Jews. Yet they felt it was important to report on and explain the customs and traditions of the Jewish people.

Henry Litchman, the first recorded Jewish resident of Quincy, advertised pictures and picture frames. In his first ad his name is spelled incorrectly (“Lichman”), which was an all too frequent occurrence when any ethnic name was concerned.<sup>9</sup> The ad appeared daily for two months. At least one clothing store was in business in 1896. Samuel Cohen, the owner, was fined for assault on a person who broke the glass in one of his showcases.<sup>10</sup>

By 1897, as many as fifty “Hebrews” held their “New Year’s celebration” at Faxon Hall, which for the next few years was used as a temporary synagogue. Rev. Samuel Horvtch [sic] of Boston was the “officiating priest.” The society was known as the “Loving Brothers church.”<sup>11</sup> From this society grew the first temple in Quincy, Ahavath Achim. A report for the following year confused Rosh Hashanah, with Yom Kippur.<sup>12</sup>

The first notice of a Jewish marriage in the city was printed on December 16, 1895 when Mike Lubarsky married Ida Grossman. The earliest Jewish social or cultural organization appears to have been the Hebrew Independent Educational Club, which met at “their hall” in South Quincy. The organization voted that year to raise funds for the Quincy City Hospital. The *Patriot* noted that the club was well organized, and “is doing good work for the short time it has been running, and promises to be of great benefit to the Hebrew people of this vicinity.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, February and March, 1894

<sup>10</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, September 2, 1896

<sup>11</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, September 28, 1897, p.3

<sup>12</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, September 17, 1898, p.4, and September 6, 1899, p.1

<sup>13</sup> *The Quincy Patriot*, October 20, 1900, p.2

By 1910 there were 350 residents of Quincy who were born in Russia, and another 200 both of whose parents were born there. Most if not all of these people were Jewish. Many lived in the Quincy Point area, which was called by one paper the “Ghetto district”.<sup>14</sup> A second synagogue developed there to meet the growing population, holding services in 1910 first at the home of one of its members, and then at a remodeled building on Cyril St.<sup>15</sup> From this start grew Temple Beth Israel, which was incorporated in 1918.

The first Jewish names to appear in the newspapers were in the court reports. Crimes by Jews tended to be peddling without a license, and a very small number of minor altercations, usually confined within the Jewish community.

For example, in 1899 David Lubarsky was arraigned for assault and paid a fine, and in 1900 Israel Stein was fined for peddling without a license. In 1900, Louis Grossman fined for destroying property, and two years later he was fined for allowing his cow to run loose.<sup>16</sup>

At this time there was noticeable anti-Jewish prejudice in the press. A contributing factor was engendered because several Jewish residents sought peddling licenses. Up to this point peddlers were either native Protestants or Irish. The newcomers may have been perceived as an economically competitive threat. In any case, the city council held a vigorous debate in 1900 on the subject. Hyman Friedberg of Willard St. had been granted a license, and Councilman Thomas Hogan objected. A minority of the council favored removing the “Jew peddlers” from the locality. Councilman Hogan pleaded the case of the abutters, who, he said, should not have to suffer from the odors arising from the offal deposited there by these outcasts of other localities. He alleged that when this class of people was present, it was an incentive for the young to steal. One councilor made the distinction between the peddlers, who were good neighbors, and the business they conducted, which was

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<sup>14</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, May 2, 1916, p.1

<sup>15</sup> Mann, Rabbi Jacob, “*The Jews of Quincy*”, unpublished paper prepared for the QHS, 1975, p.3

<sup>16</sup> *Quincy Advertiser*, December 22, 1899, p.3, February 16, 1900, p.4, May 25, 1900, p.4, and July 15, 1902, p.2

located where they lived. The licenses were allowed to stand.<sup>17</sup> In 1903 the mayor vetoed the granting of three licenses, at least two of which were to Jewish applicants, based ostensibly on this same reasoning.<sup>18</sup>

A report in the *Leader* combined anti-Jewish and anti-Chinese prejudice. Lewis Smith, a “Hebrew”, was arraigned for assaulting a “brother Hebrew” from Quincy Point in a Chinese laundry. The proprietor of the laundry was referred to as “the Chink”, while the speech and customs of the Jewish men were caricatured and ridiculed.<sup>19</sup>

It did not take long before a change in the reaction to the Jewish presence became noticeable. Jews were still viewed as different, even exotic. However, there was an early, if initially unsuccessful, attempt to understand the new Jewish population, and to explain its religion and customs. A certain degree of acceptance of the Jewish residents mixed with a continuing prejudice against Jews in the abstract. At first there was confusion. Aside from mangling Jewish names, (Rabbi Sandlovitz’s<sup>20</sup> name was never spelled the same way two times in a row as late as the 1920’s.), more fundamental mistakes were made. “Hebrews Dedicate Their Church Edifice” (Ahavath Achim on School St.) was a headline in the *Patriot* in 1903. Each newspaper reported on the ceremonies, and they were all very positive, but exhibited a lack of knowledge (and the lack of any attempt to obtain it) about the Jewish religion. Significantly, at least two Protestant ministers attended the dedication, including the pastor of the nearby Presbyterian church, who “extended the right hand of fellowship” and who “was very congratulatory” to the new society.<sup>21</sup> The congregation numbered only 32, a small number to have garnered so much attention. In what would later become a common occurrence, the *Ledger* wrote about a Jewish holiday, in this case the “Hebrew Feast” of Succoth. The report was

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<sup>17</sup> *Quincy Advertiser*, May 22, 1900, p.1

<sup>18</sup> *Quincy Leader*, July 10, 1904, p.1. In 1906 the mayor vetoed two licenses to transport liquor through the city; in this case the applicants were Irish and Italian. *Quincy Patriot*, October 20, 1906, p. 3

<sup>19</sup> *Quincy Leader*, June 6, 1903, p. 4

<sup>20</sup> Sandlovitz also owned a meat market on Water St.

<sup>21</sup> *Quincy Ledger*, September 14, 1903, p.1, *Quincy Advertiser*, September 15, 1903, p.1, and *Boston Globe*, September 14, 1903, p.3

very detailed, describing the rituals associated with not just this day, but also the upcoming Simchas Torah.”<sup>22</sup> In 1911, the *Telegram* reported on the celebration of the Jewish New Year 5672, which attracted residents of many nearby communities. Over 400 people were said to have attended.

Many found religious prejudice against Jews unacceptable and unjustified, a stance not often articulated in regard to other ethnic groups. A correspondent of the *Leader* complained about the manners of Quincy public school students who had badly treated a young Jew. The writer admitted that the behavior stemmed from the deficiencies of the schools, because they omitted a great deal that was indispensable to the success of children. Yet it urged forbearance, arguing that the schools were the great hope of the nation, because they tend to remove religious and racial prejudices from the minds of children, and “weld them all into a common Americanism.”<sup>23</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Leader* from “A Taxpayer” took the issue a step further. He not only presented Jews in a positive light, but he also condemned “well dressed boys of well-known Americans” for taunting and persecuting a Jewish boy. He called them “cowards.” He too blamed the public schools for their behavior, noting a remark by a “well known archbishop” that the chief results of our public school system were “insolence and stupidity”.

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The *Telegram* went so far as to compare Jewish religious consistency to Christian religious hypocrisy. In an editorial in 1909, commenting on the Jewish New Year, the editor pointed out that Jewish businesses were closed for the holy day. Although often characterized as a “grasping race” when it came to money, no Jew thought of money that day. On the other hand, supposedly religious Christians spent Sunday gambling and drinking, playing baseball—doing anything but attending religious instruction. Unthinking Christians were prone to belittle and poke fun at

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<sup>22</sup> *Quincy Ledger*, October 6, 1903, p.4

<sup>23</sup> *Quincy Leader*, September 19, 1903, p.2

<sup>24</sup> *Quincy Leader*, September 12, 1903, p.2

the Jew, but he has kept “plodding along”, “despised and rebuffed though he may be.” The critics remained the same, while the Jews prospered, so much so that that they have reached the top of the ladder of success. It would be well for Christians to emulate the religious zeal of the Jews, and stop scoffing at them. He concluded:

“The man who consistently adheres to his religion, no matter what it may be, because he believes it right and obeys the precepts of that religion, is more to be trusted, even though he be narrow-minded, than the man who proclaims with a loud hurrah that he is a Christian and tried to prove it by violating every tenet of the Christian faith.”<sup>25</sup>

In a sermon preached at the Water Street Presbyterian Church, the Reverend Samuel Freuder found it strange that after 2,000 years of Christian glory before them, the Jews still refused to accept Christ as Savior. But rather than condemn or berate the Jews for this, the writer speculated that upon consideration there were many things which would make their attitude less incomprehensible, “one cause being the persecution of the Jews by people professing Christianity, and in its name perpetrating such horrible crimes [pogroms] as have been reported from Russia of late.”<sup>26</sup>

Although still very small, the Jewish community attracted a disproportionate amount of press notice. The *Ledger* printed a list of Jewish contributors to the San Francisco earthquake relief fund, along with about the same number of names of native-born Protestant contributors. No other ethnic groups were similarly listed. Jewish weddings were allotted more space than other ethnic groups. In two revealing instances, the ushers, bridesmaids and guests were listed. In the first case, there were several Irish and Italian names, rare evidence of intermingling of ethnic groups. And in the second case, the paper noted that Councilman Flynn, a close friend of the bride and groom, attended, which suggested that Jews were active politically. Mixed religious marriages were extremely rare at this time. Bertha Greenburg, an 18-

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<sup>25</sup> *Quincy Telegram*, September 19, 1909, p.4

<sup>26</sup> *Quincy Ledger*, May 26, 1903, p. 3

year-old “Jewess Heiress”, married William McLeod, a “Gentile” of Quincy, much against her parent’s wishes. The *Leader* reported on this event without editorial comment.<sup>27</sup>

Jewish organizations of all types sprung up. In 1908 the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual ball held by the Independent Order of B’rith Abraham was held. Mayor Shea attended, as well as two councilmen.<sup>28</sup> As with other ethnic and religious groups, the Jewish community quickly formed a variety of social, cultural and educational organizations. A Hebrew Educational School and Chapel opened in 1910. The object of the school was to teach the children of the immigrants their own language and religion. The *Patriot* pointed out that it was not the intention of the Hebrews (as they were always called) to take their children out of the public schools, but rather to give them additional instruction after school hours.<sup>29</sup>

In 1912, the Quincy Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA) was founded. One hundred guests attended the opening celebration, including members of the Brockton YMHA, and guests from as far away as Beverly.<sup>30</sup> The following year’s event drew “hundreds” of people, including Mayor Eugene Stone, two Councilmen, and members of YMHA’s across the state. By then a Young Women’s Hebrew Association (YWHA) had also been formed.<sup>31</sup> In 1913, the YMHA conducted a class in English for Jewish people only. The Quincy school committee offered the organization a school room and teacher in the evening school.

Many of the Jewish activities paralleled those of the native Protestant and Irish populations; for example, the popular whist parties were held.<sup>32</sup> The familiar citizenship club was also active; in 1913 its vice-president

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<sup>27</sup> *Quincy Leader*, July 15, 1905, p.3

<sup>28</sup> *Quincy Ledger*, May 12, 1906, p. 2, and October 27, 1906, p.5; *Quincy Advertiser*, December 18, 1908, p.1; *Quincy Patriot*, April 17, 1909, p.2; *Quincy Telegram*, August 18, 1909, p.4. As early as 1909 a Jewish amateur baseball team, the South Quincy Juniors, was active.

<sup>29</sup> *Quincy Telegram*, January 3, 1910, p.4, and *Quincy Patriot*, January 8, 1910, p. 4 Initial enrollment was about 25 students.

<sup>30</sup> *Jewish Advocate*, March 1, 1912, p.4

<sup>31</sup> *Quincy Patriot*, April 5, 1913, p. 1

<sup>32</sup> *Quincy Patriot*, September 20, 1913, p.4

reported that 25 new voters would be registered for the upcoming primaries.<sup>33</sup> The *Bulletin* praised the “small and thrifty” Jewish population. It said they are educated and have a sound knowledge of local conditions, attributable to the work of the YMHA. The paper noted that other nationalities had already been elected to the city council, so why not a “good strong Hebrew”? Surely, “they would make no worse orators than some of the stuff that bulls its way into the papers.”<sup>34</sup>

In 1914, the first Jewish person was appointed to a city office. Joseph Grossman, (Louis’s son) was named by Mayor John Miller to the Board of Registrars. Joseph was a newspaper reporter and member of several social clubs. He was said to be one of the most popular young men of the city. Interestingly, the *Patriot* noted that he was the youngest man ever appointed to this office, but not that he was Jewish.<sup>35</sup>

The lack of knowledge about the Jewish religion and Jewish customs persisted. The editor of the *Bulletin* attended a rally at a Synagogue on a Sunday. He insisted he did not make a political speech there, but merely spoke of the candidate’s morals, because he did not want to talk politics in the “church” on a Sunday.<sup>36</sup>

The attitude toward Jews was generally positive in Quincy, but not always. It is the minstrel shows where prejudice and stereotyping seemed to be overtly acceptable. At a show in 1908 held by the mostly Irish Quincy Point social club, one of the players, a paper reported, “in the garb of a Summer Street Jew was seen coming down the aisle with a basket on his arm. He was shouting at the top of his voice in his inimitable Jew dialect, asking the people to buy suspenders, etc.”<sup>37</sup> Although this was a relatively minor example of prejudice compared to what blacks were routinely subjected to in minstrel shows, nevertheless it illustrates that Jews still could still be viewed as objects of derision.

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<sup>33</sup> *Quincy Patriot*, August 30, 1913, p. 3

<sup>34</sup> *Quincy Bulletin*, October 10, 1913, p.1

<sup>35</sup> *Quincy Telegram*, February 3, 1914, p.4 and *Quincy Patriot*, April 4, 1914, p. 2

<sup>36</sup> *Quincy Bulletin*, December 5, 1913, p.2

<sup>37</sup> *Quincy Patriot*, November 21, 1908, p.3

A continuing area of friction was in the awarding of junk and peddler licenses. Throughout this period debates and objections in the City Council continued, although they never mentioned race, religion or ethnicity by name. Nevertheless, prejudice was one of the factors behind the opposition. Prior to the early 1900's, when all the applicants were Protestant or Irish, there was little or no discussion. Only when the overwhelming number of applicants were Jewish (and secondarily Italian) did objections arise. For example, in one meeting of the City Council in 1907, sixteen junk licenses were granted, only two of which were to non-Jews. At the same meeting, eleven applicants were rejected, all but one of them Jewish. In 1908 the City Council voted to deny the license of Sam Silverman because it was originally issued to "Sim" Silverman. Silverman had been in the junk business in Quincy, listed in the City Directory as "Samuel", for seven years. Rather than look to the obvious answer (i.e., Sim was a typographical error, corrected on the license), one Councilor speculated that "Sim" might be Hebrew for "Sam", and another questioned whether they should be granting licenses to non-citizens.

The issue peaked in 1909-10 when the city council denied a license to Louis Grossman, on the grounds that his business, and junk shops in general, were a menace to health and property, and that the other junk shop owners were opposed to Grossman. Grossman was by this time a wealthy businessman, and a leader of the Jewish community. He sent a letter to the "Citizens of Quincy" through the *Daily Ledger*, refuting the claims against him, and offering a large sum to anyone who could prove his shop was a menace. He also went on offense, claiming the other junk dealers kept their junk in the cellars of their homes and in the stables with their horses, whereas he did not. The *Patriot* defended him, arguing that his place was as clean as anyone's, and no one man or firm should be singled out on such grounds. Nevertheless, the problem arose again early in 1910, when the council took up a petition to allow Grossman's junk shop, which had been operating without a license, to continue. The matter was deferred. It was not until May that Grossman was awarded the license. The *Telegram's* editor was pleased. He

praised the City Council for its willingness to give a man not just a square deal but also the benefit of the doubt. It alluded to what it termed an unfortunate remark by one of the councilors about “Jew baiting”, but vehemently denied that there ever was such a thing in Quincy, nor would there ever be. He trusted that upon further consideration, the Councilor in question would agree.<sup>38</sup> .

Between 1910 and 1915 Quincy’s population increased by about 8,000, or about one new family every day. It was one of the fastest growing places in Massachusetts with 47,876 inhabitants. This five-year increase of 24% was the highest since 1885-1890. The 1915 state census did not break down the native born versus foreign born, but (using the 1910 and 1920 federal census figures) about 70% of the total population was either foreign born, or the children of foreign or mixed parentage. One paper estimated that 29% could not speak English.<sup>39</sup> Its growth rate between 1915 and 1920 was a robust 17.7%, and the city would grow another 25.6% in the next five years to over 60,000. Manufacturing had rapidly increased in importance over the prior twenty years. In addition to the quarries, Quincy had establishments producing, among other items, iron and steel ships, rivets and studs, scales, telephones, gears, many different foundry products, engines, paints and varnish. These were shipped all over the world.<sup>40</sup> It was no longer primarily a farming economy.

The impact and importance of the new immigrants in this growth was evident everywhere. Greek, Italian, Jewish and Chinese owned businesses had proliferated. Bootblacks, small grocers, shoemakers, variety stores, junk dealers, peddlers, druggists, florists, grocers, and

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<sup>38</sup> *Quincy Daily Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 4 and June 30, 1909, p.4; *Quincy Patriot*, July 3, 1909, p.3 and January 1, 1910. P.4; *Quincy Telegram*, May 19, 1910, p.4

<sup>39</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, August 28, 1920, p. 1. This estimate was high because it included those whose mother tongue was not English. The 1920 census did not report this statistic, and the number was not supported nor confirmed elsewhere. A more reliable figure based on available information would be between 15-20%.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, Elroy S., *History of Plymouth, Norfolk and Barnstable Counties, Massachusetts*, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc. New York, 1928, Vol. 2, pp. 1110-1114.

laundries were now more often ethnic-owned than not. Jewish and Italian professionals were advertising in the City Directory.<sup>41</sup>

The number of Jews in Quincy is hard to calculate. Census figures did not specify religion. Not all immigrants from Russia were Jewish (although most were); some immigrants from other countries were Jewish (although most were not.) However, based on census figures showing country of origin, number of foreign born by country, and other demographic data (e.g., high school and grammar school graduates) fair estimates would be between 750-1,000 in 1920, and about 1,100-1,300 in 1930. Clear evidence of the new increase and impact of the Jewish population was the building of the much larger new Temple Beth Israel in 1918. A large contingent from the city's elected officials attended the dedication. They paid tribute to "the Jewish race", and Mayor Whiton especially praised the assimilation into American society of the recent immigrants.<sup>42</sup> The following year the paper reported on plans of the original Jewish congregation, misspelled as "Abath Achrun", to build a new temple in Quincy Center.<sup>43</sup>

In 1916 the *Patriot Ledger* ran a story on the "christening" of the newborn son of Mr. and Mrs. Max Cutler. What is odd about this notice is that the proud parents were Jewish. In fact, the article noted that entertainment was provided by Jewish comedians, and a collection was taken up for the Jewish War Relief Fund.<sup>44</sup> This continued lack of knowledge of Jewish customs and religion was striking, given that by then there had been Jews in Quincy for nearly 30 years. It illustrates how rarely there was contact with them, and how much distance there was between the mainstream culture and religion, and the Judaic. In other like situations, the isolation and "differentness" of a group usually led to

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<sup>41</sup> Quincy City Directories, 1916-20 passim

<sup>42</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, September 3, 1918, p. 1

<sup>43</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, November 24, 1919, p.1. The temple was at the corner of Grafton and Lyndon Streets in Quincy Point.

<sup>44</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, February 2, 1916, p. 1. The same error was made in 1928, when the paper reported that the Siegel twins were christened at a baptismal ceremony at Quincy Hospital. Rabbi Dubinsky officiated. August 14, 1928.

openly expressed friction and prejudice. It is therefore surprising that, overtly at least, such issues were rarely in evidence.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, in 1916, the paper defended Jews against attacks from anti-Semites and the stereotypes they expounded. The *Patriot Ledger* editorialized against the practice of usury, and how usurers took advantage of the neediest members of society. It suggested that charity was the best way to relieve the sufferings of the poor. And then it concluded, “Citizens of the Hebrew race, whose people have so often been accused of practicing usury, have been prominent in this effort to check a vile practice.”<sup>46</sup>

Five years later the *Quincy Enterprise* deplored Henry Ford’s canards against the “Jewish Money Ring” in his *Dearborn Independent* newspaper. Ford claimed that it was this cabal that caused all our wars. Since he was set on peace, the way to achieve it was to fight the Jews, an irony not lost on the editor of the Quincy paper who said Ford’s ignorance was colossal. His knowledge of world affairs was nil. The charges were based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which had been proved beyond doubt to be forgeries. The Jews were, in fact, no different from everyone else. They’d done their share in the uplift of humanity. The editorial ended, “Lay off the Jews, Henry Ford. They are all right.”<sup>47</sup>

Rabbi Harry Levi of Boston spoke at the Wollaston Public Forum in 1923. He pointed out that people did not understand “the Jew” because they never met him; they kept as far away as possible. He said if they allowed themselves to get closer they’d find a person not unlike themselves—a brother. In defense of those who claimed Jews were disinclined toward military service, he pointed to the 225,000 Jews who had fought in WWI, and the 2,800 who had died. He defended Harvard University’s quota on Jewish students because it was a private

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<sup>45</sup> A note of caution: The *Patriot Ledger* is the main, and for most of this time the only, source of information for this period. One cannot therefore interpret its positive and sympathetic reporting on Jews as representative of all Quincy opinion and attitudes.

<sup>46</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, June 2, 1916, p. 4

<sup>47</sup> *Quincy Enterprise*, August 12, 1921, p.4

institution, had a perfect right to bar those it wanted to, but objected to the policy because it seemed to denigrate such a distinguished institution. He almost apologized for Ford's bigotry, saying that Ford's prejudice was a result of a misunderstanding, and that what Ford didn't know about Jews would fill volumes, and what he did know about them was "nothing".<sup>48</sup>

In 1919, Mayor Joseph Whiton called a public meeting of Quincyites to encourage everyone to participate in the Americanization effort. His message was that there was a very large proportion of foreign born in Quincy, and it should be everyone's duty to make them an integral part of the city. The foreign element was a valuable addition to the life of any city—provided they are aroused to the right spirit of Americanism. Attendees at the meeting included a number of leaders of the immigrant community. A committee of ten was appointed to carry out the plans for Americanization. The committee consisted of native WASPs, as well as one Irish, one Jew and one Italian. The committee's strategy was to blanket the city with speakers who would stir up enthusiasm for the movement. Arrangements would be made with theater managers to afford a platform for these speakers. Clergy would be encouraged to preach sermons in favor of Americanization.<sup>49</sup> The *Patriot Ledger* expressed astonishment at the apathy shown by the city. Neither the Mayor nor the newly appointed committee could assimilate the aliens without the general population's active participation. The city should band together to combat the threats to the community. A month later, perhaps also noticing the lack of enthusiasm among the populace, the mayor followed up with a letter to the many fraternal organizations, congregations and industrial plants in the city, asking them to contribute their ideas.

In a letter to the editor, Frank Coffman, a scion of Jewish immigrants, and a prominent lawyer and politician in the city, took umbrage with the

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<sup>48</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, January 21, 1923, pp. 1 and 5

<sup>49</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, March 20, 1919, p. 1, March 26, 1919, p.1, March 29, 1919, p. 2 and April 5, 1919, pp. 1 and 8.

incongruity of the mayor's words and actions on immigrants. On the one hand, Coffman wrote, the mayor professed the principle that in order to Americanize the foreigner, we must treat him as one of us, not as an alien. At the same time, the city council denied several junk licenses to Jewish applicants solely because they were not American citizens. Coffman asserted that this was an arbitrary, illogical and un-American position to take, because it put citizenship as a medium of exchange or a business proposition, thereby lowering the high standards which should accompany the right to become a citizen. Using citizenship as bait is also wrong because it deprives a person from earning a living simply because he could not pass the naturalization exam. Aliens should have the same rights as citizens, except for the right to vote and to be employed by the city. He concluded that the mayor should recognize the irony of the situation, and correct it by practicing what he preached.

The *Patriot Ledger* objected to the opening of a Jewish cemetery in Germantown because it said the property was too valuable to be used for that purpose. It also worried that the cemetery would be used by other Norfolk County Jews who had no other consecrated ground to be buried in, and it didn't like the idea of Quincy land being removed from taxation and used by non-residents. It hoped that the Jews would pick out a different lot large enough for their own uses, away from the shores or other places which would naturally be developed.<sup>50</sup> Thus, although it opposed an enterprise planned by an ethnic minority the report was even handed and reasonable.

Jewish cultural and social activities expanded to keep pace with the needs of the growing population. For example, 250 Jewish residents attended the installation ceremonies for Barnet Julius, elected for the third time as President of the B'rith Abraham Lodge.<sup>51</sup> The meetings and events of the YMHA and YWHA were routinely reported on. Percy Lubarsky, (who later changed his name to Percy Lane to appear less

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<sup>50</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, June 14, 1922, p. 2

<sup>51</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, January 28, 1924, p. 4

ethnic<sup>52</sup>, and was the *Patriot Ledger's* sports columnist under the sobriquet “Percy the Pest”), was elected president of the YMHA in 1916. He was a strong supporter of naturalization and citizenship for the Jews of Quincy--the first fact about him mentioned in the press. Lubarsky was one of the very few ethnic writers of letters to the editor (or one of the few whose letters were published), thus affording a rare “new immigrant” voice. He was an ardent Republican. His political stance was not overly concerned with race or religion, but he included the fair treatment of all as a prerequisite for a good mayor, and for a good voter. He also made sure that his letters overflowed with patriotism and Americanism sentiments.<sup>53</sup>

Jewish immigration followed the same pattern as the Irish, Swedes, and Italians. During this period, they moved more into the mainstream of Quincy life, especially in the business and political worlds, while at the same time evincing strong interest in, and support for, their countrymen around the world. Occasionally the two streams intersected. At a rally to raise money for Jewish war sufferers in 1916, the organizers took the opportunity to introduce non-Jews to the problems and needs of Jews overseas. Joseph Grossman, Mayor Gustave Bates and Rev. Adelbert Hudson of the First Parish Church were the featured speakers. The mayor said he always felt proud in the presence of the Hebrew people, who were a credit, not a burden, to the state and nation. Rev. Hudson paid a “glowing tribute” to the women of Israel, who were loyal, faithful and noble.<sup>54</sup> In 1918 the paper enthusiastically lauded the brilliant record of Jewish soldiers in the War, noting that they had provided a larger percentage of their soldiers than was proportionate with their population. It then went on to reprint an article from the *Weekly Jewish News* which was equally effusive about the role of Jewish women.<sup>55</sup> These displays

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<sup>52</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, October 31, 1988, p.13

<sup>53</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, November 3 and 16, 1916, p. 4 for both. Lubarsky was not alone: Harry Levowich wrote a letter to the editor regarding the school committee, December 12, 1916, p.4

<sup>54</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, March 15, 1916, p. 1. The next year's rally received equally positive reviews. March 12, 1917, pp. 1 and 2

<sup>55</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, October 30, 1918, p.4 For his entry into the City Council race for ward 3, see the *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, October 18, 1922, p. 1

of patriotism were held up to other groups as an example of what they should be doing.

Jewish success in business was another factor. There were now many small and medium sized Jewish businesses in the city, advertising in the papers and the city directory. Particularly singled out for mention was the Grossman family. They owned the most successful Jewish business, having diversified from peddling and clothing into building materials, coal, salvage operations and real estate. They, and a very few other well-to-do Jewish families might be said to constitute *Jewish* high society. Yet, no matter how broad their acceptance was in other aspects of Quincy life, it is clear that Jews were not considered *Quincy* high society. There were no Jewish names seen at wealthy Protestant clubs or soirees, and no Protestant names at the Jewish ones. Except one.

The most prominent member of the Jewish community during this period was Joseph Grossman. He was an officer in nearly all Jewish organizations, one of the temples, and was usually the Jewish representative from Quincy to national Jewish organizations. For example, in 1921 he was one of two Quincy delegates to the conference in Boston of the American Jewish Relief Committee. As a member of the Quincy Board of Trade he was prominent in promoting the commercial advancement of Quincy outside the city. In 1927 he was featured in a series of “Who’s Who in Quincy” portraits in the *Patriot Ledger*.<sup>56</sup> By then he had been elected to the Governor’s Council and the State Legislature as a Republican, and had been a member of the Quincy Board of Registrars for 9 years, for 5 of which he was Chairman. He was the first Quincy Jewish person to cross over into traditionally non-Jewish groups. To name but a few, he was on the Board of Directors of the Quincy Co-operative Bank, a member of the Quincy Historical Society, the First Parish Club, and was on the Executive Board of the Quincy Council of the Boy Scouts.<sup>57</sup> In 1990, the *Boston Globe* ran an article on the first settlement of Jews in Quincy 100 years before. The

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<sup>56</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, March 29, 1927.

<sup>57</sup> *Boston Globe*, September 19, 1990, p.32

article highlighted the Grossman family and centered on the first Jew born in Quincy, Joseph Grossman. Then 98, Grossman reminisced about his childhood in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Quincy. He stated that “we were very warmly accepted by the people of Quincy.”

Grossman’s success in politics inspired other Jewish candidates. In 1923 Frank Coffman successfully ran for City Council. Coffman was an exemplar of a new generation of politicians. He was a college graduate, a tax lawyer, and a WWI veteran.<sup>58</sup> Another potential candidate was Barnet Julius, who, it was reported, was being groomed for the City Council. He spoke at a meeting of the Hebrew Improvement Association of Ward 2, where he emphasized the benefits of Americanization and civic betterments. He lost.<sup>59</sup> But the Jewish voters in Ward 2 remained active, hosting a rally in 1924 where all the candidates for the State Legislature spoke. Tellingly, no mention was made of race or religion, and no one praised the Jewish people. The talks focused on records, achievements and qualifications, suggesting that some measure of equality had been achieved.<sup>60</sup>

However, Grossman’s memory may have been selective. He either didn’t remember, or chose to omit, the difficulties his family, and Jews and other ethnic groups in general, confronted in getting licenses from the city to conduct their businesses. Opposition came from different directions, and for differently expressed reasons, but behind it was a prejudice against poor, strangely dressed and foreign speaking immigrants. And perhaps the unofficial exclusion of almost all Jews and other new immigrants from elite society, high political office, and executive positions in many industries (e.g., banking and shipbuilding) was of less concern to him than most others because he was able to break many of these barriers.

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<sup>58</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, October 18, 1923, p. 8

<sup>59</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, September 24, 1923, p. 8

<sup>60</sup> *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, August 29, 1924, p. 1. Another rally in November was reported on in the same way, with no mention of race or religion. November 26, 1924, p.5

If there was real prejudice in Quincy against Jews at the highest levels, what about for the average Jewish resident and, by extension, for other new immigrants as well? These people left virtually no contemporaneous record. Spokespeople for these groups, such as clergy, businessmen, leaders of ethnic clubs, and ethnic politicians, were unflinching positive about the accomplishments of their countrymen. But they concentrated on the exceptions, those few who had “made it” outside the ethnic group.

Fortunately, we have one voice from the period under consideration who has left a record of his experiences. Abraham Cohen moved to Quincy in 1922 at the age of 6. In a series of interviews<sup>61</sup>, I asked whether he had encountered any prejudice. He said that it was quite the opposite. Neither he nor his parents encountered any anti-Semitism. He and the other Jewish children in his neighborhood of Quincy Point lived side by side with Italians, and grew up together with no friction at all. In fact, he pointed out that the parents of the children were for the most part immigrants, who spoke to their children in their original languages (Yiddish and Italian). Because the children grew up together so closely, they learned the other language and became trilingual.<sup>62</sup> He did not encounter any prejudice in high school, or later in the larger Quincy community.

This paper began with Charles Francis Adams forsaking Quincy in 1893. Adams was the scion of an old, prominent and aristocratic Yankee WASP family (as much as any American family can be considered aristocratic.) He symbolizes the “old” Quincy: except for its Irish population, a homogeneous, semi-rural, small town, dominated by the same stock of people since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>61</sup> The information in these paragraphs was culled from interviews with Mr. Cohen from September 2010 to April, 2011, and from two unpublished manuscripts detailing the history of his family. One cannot generalize from one voice. There are certainly more, and interviews with them would bring a great deal more insight into these years.

<sup>62</sup> He also spoke of an intermarriage between his great uncle, Samuel Grossman, and Emma Fogerty in the 1890's. According to Mr. Cohen, she was totally accepted into the family.

It is fitting, then, that the paper close with the image of Abe Cohen, then nine years old, marching with his classmates from his school to Merrymount Park, holding a small American flag as a part of the Tercentenary Pageant in 1925. The son of Jewish immigrants, and a resident of Quincy since 1922, Abe represented the “new” Quincy that had emerged in those 40+ years: an ethnically and religiously diverse industrial city. In stark contrast to Adams fleeing a city he no longer recognized, and one that he believed no longer recognized him, Cohen lived in Quincy for the rest of his long life. Throughout those nearly 90 years, he led the fight for an even more diverse city, playing a leading role in bringing in and welcoming blacks and Asians into the city.

Bob Bloomberg:



## **Publications**

### **Books**

*Tufts Medical Center* (co-authored with Daniel Bird) 2015, Images of America Series, Arcadia Press

## **Book Reviews**

“Sharon, Massachusetts: A History,” by The Sharon American Bicentennial Committee” *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, February 25, 1977

“With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln,” by Stephen B. Oates, *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, March 22, 1977

“Massachusetts: A Pictorial History,” by Walter M. Whitehill and Norman Kotker,” *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, March 4, 1977

“Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag During Reconstruction,” by Benjamin Ginsberg, *Southern Jewish History* (Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society,) Volume 13, 2010

“So Ends This Day: The Portuguese in American Whaling 1765-1927,” by Donald Warrin, *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. 43, No. 1 Winter, 2015

“The ‘Infamas Govener’: Francis Bernard and the Origins of the American Revolution”, by Colin Nicholson, *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. 44, No.2 Summer, 2016

## **Journal/Newspaper Articles**

“Joseph Crellius and German Immigration to New England 1740-1754,” *Quincy History* (Quincy Historical Society,) No. 21, Summer 1989

“The Many Labors of Abe Cohen,” *The Jewish Advocate*, September 2, 2011

“The Titanic and the Jews,” *The Jewish Advocate*, April 13, 2012

“Hecht House’s Legacy Remains in the Hearts and Minds of Many,” *Jewish Advocate*, May 10, 2013

“Lipman Pike: A Truly Historic Figure for the Game of Baseball,” *The Jewish Advocate*, August 23, 2013

“Remembering the Life and Rich Political Legacy of George Fingold,”  
*The Jewish Advocate*, January 24, 2014

“Games of My Youth,” *Mass-Pocha*, The Journal of the Jewish  
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“Moses Michael Hays-The Most Important of the Founding Fathers of  
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“The Shicks of Watertown,” *The Town Crier*, The Newsletter of the  
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No. 11, March 13, 2020

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“Elementary School Name Origins”, *The Town Crier*, The Newsletter of  
the Historical Society of Watertown (Mass.), July 2020

“The Legacy of Jack and Marion’s”, *The Jewish Advocate*, Vol. 211,  
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“Perkins School for the Blind”, *The Town Crier*, The Newsletter of the Historical Society of Watertown (Mass.), Jan 2021

“Trackless Trolleys in Watertown”, *The Town Crier*, The Newsletter of the Historical Society of Watertown (Mass.), Apr, 2021

### **Miscellaneous**

Member, Board of Directors, ALS Association, Massachusetts Chapter, 2017-present Treasurer, 2018-present

Staff Correspondent, *The Jewish Advocate*, 2019-2020 (Paper ceased publication in September, 2020)

Historian and Genealogist, Quincy Historical Society, 2010-2019

Board of Trustees, Quincy Historical Society, 2014-2017

Advisory Board, The Bingham Program, 2015-present

Councilor, Historical Society of Watertown, 2019-present

Member, Historic District Commission, Watertown, MA 2020-present

Research Assistant for two classes in Museum Design at Tufts University. Subjects were the architect Elwyn Gowen (2011-2012 exhibition) and the children’s book illustrator Boris Artzybasheff (2012-2013 exhibition)

Historical Consultant to the Faith Lutheran Church, Quincy MA 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 1889-2014

Consultant to All Souls Church, Braintree, MA for application to be included on the National Register of Historic Places (successfully completed 2015)

Consultant to Souther Tide Mill, Quincy, Ma for preliminary application for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (successfully completed, 2015)

Owner, Insight Genealogy

B.A., History, University of Massachusetts

M.A., U.S. History, University of Chicago