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RESOURCES ON AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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The records in the National Archives are not arranged in terms of religious, racial, or ethnic groups; there is no stack area containing a collection of Judaica. The holdings of the National Archives, the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government, are organized into record groups according to their provenance, that is to say, according to their administrative origins. Within each record group the records are arranged, as far as possible, in the original order in which they were filed. Since the records were filed to facilitate the operations of an office, not the future research interests of scholars, they are rarely arranged in terms of "subjects" such as scholars pursue. Because the Federal Government has generally dealt with its citizens as individuals and not as members of religious, racial, or ethnic groups, there are comparatively few records specifically dealing with individual Jews as such or with Jews as a group.

Incidental to the administration of governmental functions a considerable quantity of Federal records were created or accumulated pertaining to American Jews and their environments. They range in time from the colonial period to the present decade and are found in at least 125 of the approximately 300 record groups in the National Archives. To utilize fully these holdings, a researcher should know, or have a reasonable expectation, that a Jew or Jews had specific relationships with components of the Federal Government.

What follows is a very general description of some of the bodies of records relating to American Jewish history disclosed by a recent survey of the National Archives, with emphasis on little-used sources. Time permits citation of only a few examples. The National Archives hopes to publish a more detailed account of records in its custody relating to American Jewry.

Certain record groups are intrinsically of a general nature — that is, they necessarily pertain to a variety of subjects. Among such are the General Records of the United States Government, including the Papers of the Continental Congress, the record copies of statutes,

executive orders and proclamations, and treaties — the legal enactments basic to our history; the records of the House of Representatives and Senate, which range over every area of governmental concern; the records of Federal courts and the related records of the Justice Department; the State Department records; basic demographic sources such as the records of the Bureau of the Census and the General Land Office, and the little known Civil War draft records; and the records of the General Accounting Office relating to almost every area in which Federal funds are expended.

The Revolutionary War Prize Cases, for example, contain a case file involving Aaron Lopez of Newport. An early Supreme Court case file, *Nathan Levy vs. John Gadsby*, deals with the efforts of Levy, an inhabitant of Georgetown, D. C., to collect a note acquired during a business venture in Alexandria, Virginia, in the years 1796–1797. The district court records, most nearly complete for the Southern District of New York and the District of Columbia, contain cases involving American Jews such as *G. Ricordi and Co. vs. Oscar Hammerstein* relating to an alleged infringement by Hammerstein on the copyright to Puccini's "*La Bohème*." Business historians might profitably examine the numerous bankruptcy case files; transcripts of meetings of creditors of unsuccessful garment manufacturers (good sources for industry studies) are present in these files. The Court of Claims, which adjudicates claims against the Government, has many cases relating to American Jewish history. The case of *Meyer Levi vs. the United States* relates to a claim for property taken from Levi of Port Gibson, Mississippi, by the Union Army during the Civil War; French Spoliation cases No. 4130–4134 concern the loss of five ships during the Quasi-War with France that had been insured by the underwriting firm of J. and P. Mark of New York City; one of the Indian Depredation Cases concerns merchandise taken from the H. Levi and Co. store in Graham County, Arizona, by Apache Indians.

The central files of the Department of Justice are a very rich, neglected source. A cursory search for records relating to Brandeis located records on his role as counsel for Louis Glavis in the Balinger-Pinchot controversy, on advice he gave concerning the wording of a corporation tax bill, and on his role, with Samuel Untermyer, as a Special Assistant to the Attorney General in a suit against the Riggs National Bank of Washington. For Samuel Gompers there is a file relating to the famous Buck's Stove and Range Co. case, as well as many other records.

The census schedules, 1790–1880, contain much social and economic information, becoming more detailed with each successive

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census. The 1860 schedules for Santa Fe, New Mexico record that Levi Spiegelberg, a 29-year-old merchant born in Prussia and possessing \$15,000 in real estate and \$50,000 in personal estate, was wed to his wife Betty, a 17-year-old native of Prussia, within the preceding year. The schedules also list Manuel, Lehman, and Solomon Spiegelberg. The last was a 35-year-old merchant, whose only recorded assets were \$300 in personal estate. An adult female and four children resided with him, presumably his family.

Perhaps the greatest opportunities for research in the National Archives on American Jewish history are in the economic area. In the last century the principal Federal agency concerned with matters economic was the Treasury Department, which had duties and power in the areas of money and banking, levying taxes, and customs and maritime affairs.

The National Archives contains various tax lists, such as the lists for the direct tax of 1798 for parts of the State of Pennsylvania; the tax lists for the Direct Tax levied in South Carolina, 1863-1870, and internal revenue assessment lists for the entire nation, 1862-1915. The direct tax entry for Isaac Franks of Germantown, Pa., shows the property he possessed in 1798 and its evaluation (\$330). The "Old Loan Records" of the Bureau of the Public Debt contain information on purchases of United States securities by American Jews. Entries show that Jacob Cohen, Phillips Levy, and Marks Hyman purchased securities in the 6 percent loans of 1812 and 1813 to be held in trust for the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Philadelphia. The letters from foreign banks received by the Secretary of the Treasury, 1833-1855, and the related letters from foreign bankers and indemnities, 1833-1866, contain letters from the London branch of the house of Rothschild, from the American agents of the Rothschilds, R. and I. Phillips of Philadelphia and later, August Belmont, and from the firm of J. J. Cohen, Jr., and Bros. of Baltimore and Albert Speyer. Treasury records also contain many documents relating to the banking firm of J. and W. Seligman of New York, especially on the marketing of public securities. Indicative of the research possibilities are three letters from the firm to the Secretary of the Treasury dated January 22, 23, and 26, 1875, discussing negotiations with the Rothschilds and Morgans to form a syndicate to market a United States bond issue.

To further illustrate the possibilities afforded by Federal records, let us consider the documentation on a business transaction of a nineteenth century Jewish entrepreneur. The Post Office Department records show that M. C. Mordecai of Charleston, South Carolina, received contracts in 1855 and 1860 to carry the mail by steamer from Charleston to Havana via Savannah and Key West for \$50,000 and

\$60,000, respectively. The ship's register maintained by the Treasury for the steamer *Isabel*, which was used to fulfill the contract, discloses the names of Mordecai's associates and the shares each owned in the vessel. He personally owned 5,335,036/12,500,000 of the ship, and he and his partners in Mordecai and Co. owned 4,411,509/12,500,000. Finally, a Court of Claims case concerns moneys allegedly due under the 1860 contract.

Treasury and War Department records contain much information on economic activities of Jews during the Civil War. The Restricted Commercial Intercourse volumes maintained by the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury and the records of the Treasury Special Agencies relate to economic activities in war zones. The clearances to sutlers issued by the Georgetown Collector of Customs and the disallowed sutler's claims in the records of the Second Auditor of the Treasury contain many references to Jewish sutlers. The "Turner-Baker" papers of the Adjutant General's Office have information on Army investigations of suspected illicit trade. One file details what happened when a Mr. Loeb shipped notions from Philadelphia to Memphis which the Philadelphia police assumed were destined for the secessionists.

The National Archives also has a considerable quantity of records on economic activities within the Confederacy. Among the Confederate Treasury records are letters from the firms of M. C. Mordecai and Co. of Charleston and Wm. B. Isaacs and Co. of Richmond. The Confederate Citizens File created after the war by the Army for use in loyalty investigations consists of vouchers, receipts, and the like relating to individuals and firms doing business with the Confederacy. Approximately fifty-five Cohens appear in these records.

The growth of Federal investigative, regulatory, and promotional functions affecting various sectors of the economy is, of course, a major feature of recent American history. In the National Archives are records of various regulatory agencies, records of World War I and II economic agencies, records of the Commerce, Labor, and Agriculture Departments, and records of New Deal agencies such as the National Recovery Administration and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. References to American Jews are found in many of these records. In the course of an investigation of the Beef Trust by the Bureau of Corporations, the predecessor of the Federal Trade Commission, information was gathered on the meat packing firms of Morris and Co. and Schwarzschild and Sulzberger. For the latter there are statements by company officials avowing the "absolute independence" of the firm. The NRA records contain many documents useful for industry and company histories, such as various

garment industries, the motion picture industry, and the scrap and waste materials trade. The unpublished reports and studies of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, 1912-1915, include life histories of Jewish migratory laborers and unpublished studies by Selig Perlman of the garment industry and labor exchanges in New York City.

As one would expect, the National Archives contains many records about American Jews who were in the Federal service. These records relate to prominent individuals and to the unchronicled majority. Many "appointment papers" for civil officials and service records for military and naval personnel of the nineteenth century are in the National Archives; most twentieth century personnel and military service records are not in our custody. Dispersed through many record groups is a considerable quantity of records produced by or about Jewish officials in the normal course of their activities.

The earliest Jewish Federal official for whom we have records is Abraham Cohen, Deputy Postmaster at Georgetown, South Carolina, 1790-1800. Treasury records contain correspondence with Moses Myers, the Collector of Customs at Norfolk, 1827-1830. State Department records include many dispatches of American Jews in the diplomatic service. The records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its predecessors have many interesting items about Jews in the Indian service. Among the records of the Office of Indian Trade, 1795-1822, are letters, accounts, and other papers pertaining to Levi Sheftall, Joseph Saul, Abraham Abrahams, and Jacob Mark. The records of the Michigan Superintendency include letters of John Hays, the Indian Agent at Fort Wayne, 1820-1823. The National Archives recently accessioned the general correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of Commerce, among which are letters of Oscar S. Straus, the first American Jew to achieve Cabinet rank. Bernard M. Baruch is well represented by documents in the records of the War Industries Board of World War I and records of other agencies. Felix Frankfurter's activities as Chairman of the War Labor Policies Board of World War I are documented by the records of that Board. There are, of course, many other American Jews whose Federal service can be studied using the holdings of the National Archives.

The records of the armed services are by far the most voluminous and complex part of the holdings of the National Archives. Yet considerable information about a given officer or serviceman, particularly if his unit is known, may be found with relatively little difficulty. It is possible to trace the military career of Abraham C. Myers, the Quartermaster General of the Confederacy from his

appointment to West Point to his defection to the Confederacy and, in the Confederate War Department records, to his dismissal as Quartermaster General. The veterans' pension records contain much about the rank and file. The pension file for Leopold Karpeles, a Civil War veteran, gives his birthplace, Prague; recounts his Civil War experiences; has some information on his civilian life; and notes details of the death and burial of him and his wife.

A major source for American Jewish history, as yet largely unexploited, is the records relating to immigration. The earliest and most extensive body of records is the passenger lists, on which were noted for each passenger information such as age, marital status, country of origin, occupation, and destination. The lists are very voluminous but name indices exist for Boston, 1848-1891, Baltimore, 1820-1897, Philadelphia, 1820-1899, and New York, 1820-1840.

A greatly neglected source are the records created since 1882 in the enforcement of various statutes regulating immigration. At the departmental level the National Archives has sixteen volumes of outgoing correspondence, 1882-1887 and 1890-1903, and a 2-volume docket of cases, 1882-1887, of the Secretary of the Treasury, who supervised immigration affairs to 1903. The general correspondence of the Secretary of Commerce for the years 1903-1913 and the general files of the Department of Labor for the years 1913-1940 also contain records on the administration of immigration.

The records relating to immigration at the bureau level are quite detailed. Among the Immigration and Naturalization Service records for the Treasury period and afterwards to about 1906 are 38 linear feet of incoming correspondence, 1882-1906, and 340 volumes of press copies of outgoing correspondence, 1891-1912. There is a register series for the years 1891-1903.

In 1906, when naturalization was added to the activities of the Bureau of Immigration and its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, two large general correspondence files were started, one on immigration, the other on naturalization. The National Archives has the general correspondence on immigration for 1906-1932, and the general correspondence on naturalization for 1906-1940. These relate to policy determinations, to procedures, and to specific immigrants. Another file of this Bureau awaiting scholarly exploitation is the series of records relating to the education and Americanization of aliens, 1913-1936.

At the field office level there are 340 volumes of press copies of outgoing correspondence of the Ellis Island office. Unfortunately many of these copies are illegible. The Philadelphia records for 1882 to 1912, however, are both interesting and usable. They

include records of the Pennsylvania State Board of Public Charities, which administered immigration in Philadelphia before 1895. There are letters received, 1882–1903, and letters sent, 1884–1912, and small, interesting series like the quarterly reports of the Board of Public Charities, 1882–1890, immigration inspector's diaries, 1882–1890, and daily reports of immigration inspectors, 1888–1893. The medical examination of immigrants by the Public Health Service and its predecessors resulted in additional sources on immigration. Records of a public health station at the Baltic port of Libau, 1909–1913, contain first-hand accounts of the great wave of Jewish migration in the pre-World War I period. There are also documents about more recent immigrants. Among the records of the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York, are case files on the 982 refugees (mostly Jews), brought to the United States from Italy in 1944. They include biographical data, social case studies, health records, employment data, and related correspondence. We recently accessioned the records of the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief; they may contain references to Jews.

Additional information on the social and cultural history of American Jewry is scattered unpredictably through the holdings of the National Archives. A letter of Solomon Etting, June 14, 1830, as the Chairman of the Infirmary Committee of the University of Maryland Medical School, in the correspondence of the Secretary of the Treasury with the Collectors of Customs at Baltimore, is representative of this kind of document. There are also records about Jewish scientists and technologists. The Nautical Almanac records contain letters of Albert A. Michelson on his early work on the velocity of light. The Greenland diary of Sergeant Edward Israel, 1883–1884, who perished during his service as astronomer with the Greely expedition, is among the Weather Bureau records.

During the New Deal period Federal activities expanded to many new social and cultural fields, some involving American Jews. The records of the Federal Theater Project of the Work Projects Administration include production bulletins of Yiddish theatrical performances, scripts of Yiddish plays, and radio scripts of the New York City Jewish Theatre of the Air. An attempt to resettle unemployed Jewish workers on the land is recorded in the minutes of Jersey Homesteads, Inc., 1933–1935, which directed a project at Hightstown, New Jersey. The minutes as well as other records on loans to the industrial co-operative are among the records of the Farmers Home Administration.

Quite different from the records described previously are the

records of the Danish Government of the Danish West Indies, now the Virgin Islands. They contain probably the oldest records in the National Archives falling within the scope of this paper — records of Gabriel Milan, the Governor of St. Thomas, 1684–1685. Other series such as the Matrikulen (tax records), the Borger Brevs (citizenship grants), and the Landsting Protokollen (Upper Court Records) contain references to the Sephardic Jewish community in the islands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is even two inches of correspondence, ca. 1865–1916, with the Hebrew Congregation at St. Thomas.

In the records mentioned previously, only rarely are individuals specifically identified as being Jewish. The National Archives contains relatively few, but some extremely interesting, records that relate to Jews as a group, to issues particularly identified with Jews, and to Jewish religious practices.

Perhaps the earliest record in the National Archives in this category is the well-known letter of Jonas Phillips to the Constitutional Convention protesting, as contrary to the religious views of Jews, the inclusion in the Pennsylvania State Constitution of an oath of belief in the divine inspiration of the New Testament.

The next Federal actions dealing with Jews as a group for which there are records in the National Archives relate to diplomatic moves to protect the rights of American citizens of Jewish faith or to intercede on behalf of Jewish minorities overseas. While this story is well known in general outline, no one has, to my knowledge, fully exploited the records on the subject in the dispatches, instructions, post records, and the Miscellaneous and Domestic Letters of the State Department. Cyrus Adler and Aaron M. Margalith's standard work, *With Firmness in the Right*, does not, to cite one example, refer to the interesting petition in the Miscellaneous Letters for January, 1877, signed by leaders of Jewish communities in many nations asking for American support of the rights of the Jews in the Danubian Principalities.

Somewhat the same considerations apply to Grant's notorious General Order No. 12,¹ the story of which is very well told in Bertram W. Korn's *American Jewry in the Civil War*. Nevertheless, the full

¹ This order has been erroneously referred to as General Order No. 11. The record set of orders of the Department of the Tennessee in Record Group 94: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, were checked by the present writer. No. 11 is an order reporting court martials. Further, the revocation order, General Order No. 2 of Jan. 6, 1863, specifically records it as "No. 12." The origins of this error apparently go back to *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, vol. XVII, part 2, p. 424, which erroneously refers to it as "No. 11."

background of that incident requires additional detailed research in the many records in the Archives on economic affairs during the Civil War.

The records of the armed services include a scattering of documents on Jews as a group. The story of the Civil War Jewish chaplaincy is quite well known. Army and Navy records carry the story down almost to World War II. Of particular interest is the correspondence of the Army's Chief of Chaplains with the Jewish Welfare Board in the years immediately following World War I.

From the end of the Civil War down to the start of World War II, the Army and the Navy invariably replied to inquiries concerning the number of Jews in the services or in a past war that religion was not recorded officially. So far as is now known, the earliest official record of religious affiliation of members of the armed forces appeared on the World War I health record form, and that was only to assure proper burial. Use of this health form raised problems, according to records of the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. In 1917, several Jews enlisting in Detroit were forced to register as either Protestant or Catholic, the form lacking an entry for Jews. After protests reached the Navy Department an investigation disclosed that the pharmacist's mate filling out the forms, a man named Doyle, "was under the impression that all religions not Catholic were Protestant. He has been corrected in this matter." Only in 1941 and later was religion officially noted on service records and even then partly on a voluntary basis.

The records of the armed services also contain documents concerning allegations of discrimination. Two interesting examples occur in the general correspondence of the Provost Marshal General, who administered the Selective Service System in World War I. Several files contain protests against a passage in the official "Manual of Instructions for Medical Advisory Boards" stating, "The foreign born, and especially Jews, are more apt to malingering than the native born." Jewish draft board members and physicians protested, as did Louis Marshall acting for the American Jewish Committee. Quite different in nature is the file pertaining to allegations of anti-Jewish prejudice on the part of a board member in Pittsburgh. In addition to letters of complaint and a petition to remove the board member, there are investigative reports containing information about people and events in the Third Ward of Pittsburgh.

Most of the records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service mentioned previously do not deal with Jews as such. A few files specifically relate to the Jewish component of the stream of migrants. The most significant file, to my mind, bears the title,

" 'Hebrew,' Race or Religion?" and concerns the justification of the classification "Hebrews" in the published statistics on immigration after 1903. When Simon Wolf and others protested that gathering such statistics was an inquiry into religious beliefs, the agency solicited and received the opinions of the State Department, the Bureau of the Census, and of prominent American Jews on whether "Hebrew" designated a race or a religion. The agency's formal report justifying its practice, various documents about the collection of such statistics, and a copy of a 1911 letter to Theodore Roosevelt on the subject are also present in this file.

Other records in the National Archives dealing with Jews as a group are the records relating to kosher slaughtering, created during the early New Deal under the National Industrial Recovery Act, the records of the War Refugee Board about attempts to aid victims of Nazi oppression in World War II, and the records of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946.

Many students of American Jewish history have already exploited parts of the holdings of the National Archives. Much remains undone. The required researches may necessitate considerable sophistication and industry and may presuppose a knowledge of administrative history as well as detailed information on American Jewry. Use of the records in the National Archives will aid the historian seeking a comprehensive view of the American-Jewish community. For when records on American Jewry are found in archival groups, they are located, figuratively speaking, in their historical context, providing unique opportunities to explore backgrounds and to engage in comparative studies.